

**“I stopped seeking the pleasure of the people and then I was able to
speak the truth.”**

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمه الله

STORIES OF COURAGE, CONFIDENCE AND CHARACTER

MUFTI ISMAIL IBN NAZIR SATIA

*Dedicated to my late father
(Allah drench him in his mercy).
He taught us morals, values and
principles.*

*A man who fought for truth
and justice.*

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Foreword

"A person will always interpret everything he hears according to the light which dominates his heart." Imam Al-Ghazzali RH

The impression that is still indelible in the hearts of man is the effect of the Glorious Qur'an because it has brought truths to the world that otherwise would have been contaminated or lost in the archives of history. The effect of the indelible impression of the Wisdom of the Holy Qur'an can be gleaned from the book Mufti Ismail Satia has written on the Blessed Prophets (PBUH) and sages that illuminated the world too. It is the deep feeling of gratitude to Allah, the Subtle that this book permeated my heart and dissolved all anxieties, alleviated all fears and gave me hope in the Ummah of Nabi Muhammad (PBUH) because it is a concrete representation that the courageous life of our predecessors still have an impact on our souls thereby, keeping us connected with Allah, the Wise and blessed lifestyle of the Seal of Prophets, Nabi Muhammad (PBUH).

Taking Imam Al-Ghazzali's view as a prism to understand this book, it is clear the lives of all the Prophets (PBUH all) and the rightly guided predecessors were lives of courage, refined character and great confidence because their hearts were illuminated by their belief in Allah, the Eternal. Therefore, in the opening I wish to begin affirming the life of Muhammad (PBUH) as the wholesome precursor to anoint our thinking and the Holy Qur'an as the fountain of inspiration.

The all-encompassing Qur'an is the life of Nabi Muhammad (PBUH) and his actions reflect it. He spoke of all the Prophets (PBUH) and again using the eternal flavour, Mufti Ismail wrote this book which will

enlighten your relationship with a history you know but, did not give enough attention too. Allah, the Encompassing says:

"We narrate to you (O Muhammad) the narratives of the prophets, so that your heart may be strengthened by them." – (Qur'an 11:120)

Commentating on the above verse, the author of Bayān Al- Qur'an writes under the section of Masāil Al-Sulūk:

دَلَّ عَلَيَّ أَنَّ لِقَاصِصَ الْمُتَقُولِينَ تَأْثِيرُهُ فِي الْقُلُوبِ تَنْبِيْهُاً وَتَقْوِيَةً وَتَشْهِيطاً وَمِنْ لَمَّا اَهْتَمُّ الْقَوْمُ سَرَدَ حِكَايَاتِ الْأَوْلِيَاءِ

"This verse bears testimony to the fact that the narratives of the pious have a profound impact on the hearts, in terms of motivation, encouragement and rejuvenation. It is for the same reason our pious predecessors took time and pride to gather the tales of the saints of their era, so that it would motivate others and inspire them"

In this regard, Mufti Ismail Satia has put together a combination of anecdotes and stories which are appealing to all segments of society, be it the academic minded, the average individual, the child or the adolescent, to provide that spiritual nourishment and motivation. It is in the conversational style of the narratives that these stories and anecdotes find appeal because, Mufti Ismail Satia keeps it contemporary. Almighty Allah mentions in the 12th Chapter of the Quran:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

"Indeed, in the narratives of the prophets, there are lessons for the intellectual." - (Qur'an 12:111)

Indicating to us that we need to delve into it to learn thus, reading Mufti saheb's book becomes the medium to attain the action of ayat/evidence from the Qur'an.

The great Imam Shāfi'e (may Allāh's mercy be with him) said,

قَدْ مَاتَ قَوْمٌ وَمَا مَاتَ مَكَارِمُهُمْ

"Some people have died a physical death, but their legacy lives on."

Surely, the legacy of the prophets and the pious continue. The book, therefore, is a treasure chest for the believer to understand the stories to be the alchemy of guidance/hidayaah. Therefore, I am optimistic on the promises of Allāh that He will make it beneficial for the reader and the writer because, there is a sincere investment behind every word of this book to be a means of spiritual beneficence.

وَاللَّهُ اشْأَلُ أَنْ يُدِيمَ بِهِ الْإِقَادَةَ

My heart is impelled to implore Allah's continuous guidance for work of this nature to continue forever because, it is a source of inspiration to the fainthearted, a jewel for the scholar, a delight for a child yearning for truth, a happiness to the depressed and a blessing for the believer.

وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ

"And that is not difficult for Almighty Allah." – (Qur'an 14:20)

(Shaykh) Sulaiman Moola, South Africa –

11 January, 2021 – 27 Jumad Al-Ula 1442

Preface

From Abu Sa'eed Khudri (Allah be pleased with him) Prophet ﷺ said,

"Let not any of you belittle himself."

They said: **"O Messenger of Allah, how could anyone of us belittle himself?"**

He said: **"If he sees something concerning which he should speak out for the sake of Allah but does not say anything, Allah will say to him on the Day of Resurrection:**

'What prevented you from speaking concerning such and such?'"

He will say: **"Fear of the people."**

Allah will say: **"Rather, you should have feared me."**

(Sunan Ibn Majah)

This book is aimed at teenage boys, so from a young age they are empowered to be courageous and confident individuals. To fit this character profile, the first thing it entails is to be truthful and honest. Honesty requires boldness and bravery and to show honesty in a moment of difficulty necessitates true courage. Lying is always the weak person's way out and as history has shown us, they will never be able to stand up for truth nor justice. As the famous saying goes, *'Violence spreads because of the silence of good people.'*

My purpose is to empower boys and make real men of them. This should be instilled from a young age through the behaviour of the adults around them and upbringing in the home. My teacher once said, *'We cannot be, what we do not see.'* We see parents pamper and mollycoddle their boys in every way and of course, there is no harm in loving and nurturing your boys, but there are limits to the

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overprotectiveness. Push them to be brave like the Prophets ﷺ, to exemplify chivalrous behaviour like the Sahabah (Allah be pleased with them) and encourage them to be gallant and noble like our predecessors. This begins with the most simplest of things - from their daily clothing alone, a whole character is moulded and emulated. The wearing of skin-tight clothes, displaying the awrah (body parts), wearing clothes similar to those made for the opposite gender - all of this defies and goes against the external necessary image of a young Muslim boy.

More and more, there is a need for justice on all levels. We need boys who grow up to stand up for themselves, rectify the wrong they are exposed to in themselves, in their families and in their communities. If they're walking in the street and they see someone getting harassed or abused, they will not walk past nor be a bystander (or in this day and age, a film producer!), rather, they will readily and willingly stop crime, evil, inequality and injustices in and around them.

The Holy Qur'an speaks extensively about stories and the powerful messages they contain with a whole surah, 'Al- Qasas', dedicated to this. And we all know the most authentic of stories are those of the Prophets ﷺ, they contain the most lessons and are placed in the Holy Qur'an to reflect upon and take heed from. Hence, as an introduction, I have started with something beautiful I read which was written by Shaykh Salman al-Ouda. I think it ties in very well with the stories I have selected in the rest of the book, which will hopefully empower our young boys into becoming strong-minded, bold and confident men. Remember, you are braver than you believe, you are stronger than you seem and you are smarter than you think.

Ismail ibn Nazir Satia (one who is in dire need of Allah's forgiveness, mercy and pleasure), Blackburn.

1 Rajab 1442

Introduction

Shaykh Salman al-Ouda – Saudi Arabia (Shaykh Salman is a member of the International Union for Muslim Scholars and on its Board of Trustees. He is a director of the Arabic edition of the website Islam Today and appears on several TV shows and authors newspaper articles).

The happiest people who ever lived on the face of the Earth were the Prophets ﷺ

This is even though they suffered more than anyone else. They had to endure severe persecution in delivering the message that Allah had entrusted them with.

Beyond that, they were subjected to the same difficulties that all other human beings suffer from, like illness, poverty, hunger, and thirst, and often to a greater than usual degree.

Once, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ suffered from a bad fever so that his forehead was drenched in sweat and he was quite visibly suffering.

One of his Companions (Allah be pleased with him) said to him:

"You are suffering from quite a severe illness."

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

"Yes. I must endure illness to double the severity of the illnesses that you must endure." (Bukhari)

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Starvation

He also suffered from starvation. Once, during the time of persecution, the Prophet ﷺ came out from his home and found that Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) and `Umar (Allah be pleased with him) were outside. He asked them:

"What brings you out at this hour?"

They told him that it was hunger which brought them out. The Prophet ﷺ then said:

"By Allah, the same thing that has brought you out of your homes has brought me out as well."

At times, like during the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet ﷺ faced hunger so severe that he had to tie two stones to his stomach in an attempt to relieve the pain (the stones would provide coolness to the stomach).

The Prophets ﷺ all had to endure the persecution of their people on account of the message Allah sent them with. However, The Prophets' ﷺ hearts were strong. Moreover, they remained open-hearted and magnanimous to the people and they persevered until their defeats were turned to victories.

The beauty of their lives is startling. Despite what they had to endure, they knew more happiness and contentment than any other people. This can be seen in how they behaved and how they responded to what they encountered in life.

Contentment with Hardships

We see this extraordinary contentment in the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ most clearly when he faced the greatest of difficulties. For instance, once he went to spread the message of Islam to the people of Ta'if. They not only rejected his call but had the children and ruffians of the town drive him away by pelting him with stones.

He escaped from the city with his shoes soaked with his blood, and his body covered in blood and dirt. Once safely away from the city, he raised his voice to Allah in supplication:

"O, Allah! I complain to You of my weakness, my lack of resources, and my weakness before the people. O Most Merciful of those who are merciful. O Lord of the weak and my Lord too. To whom have you entrusted me? To a distant person who receives me with hostility? Or to an enemy to whom you have granted authority over my affair?"

So long as you are not angry with me, I do not care. Your favour is of a more expansive relief to me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Countenance by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set right, lest Your anger or Your displeasure descends upon me. I desire your pleasure and satisfaction until You are pleased. There is no power and no might except with You."

Tests & True Faith

True faith in Allah is what brings this kind of contentment and happiness to the hearts. This does not mean that life for the believer will be free of hardships.

When we speak of the passage of time — when we speak of weeks, months, years, and ages — we are speaking about life. The dead do not experience time. Centuries go by and they are heedless of it all. Allah has made this life a trial for the living. Allah says: **“He who created death and life to test which of you would be best in deeds.”** (67: 2)

Life is a test for believers and disbelievers alike. It is a test for sinners as well as for the virtuous. Everyone is being tested as long as they are alive.

But Allah did not leave us in this world on our own. He sent the Prophets ﷺ and the scriptures to us to illuminate our way through life. This guidance is not only to show us how to attain happiness in the Hereafter, but it is also for this life.

Many people think religion is only about the Hereafter, that its benefit is limited to the next life. The truth is that just like religion shows us the way to attain Allah's pleasure and the reward of Paradise, it is the way by which a believer realises true contentment and a happy heart in this world as well. True happiness can only come from faith and knowledge of Allah.

Allah says: **“Is the one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam so that it has enlightenment from Allah (no better than one who is hard-hearted)? Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against remembering Allah!”** (39:22)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التَّمِيمِيُّ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ عَلْقَمَةَ بْنَ وَقَّاصٍ اللَّيْثِيَّ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: **“إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِغُلَامٍ أَمْرٌ بِي مَانُوسٍ، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَبْتَكَحُهَا أَوْ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ.”**

Narrated 'Umar bin Al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him): I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, **“The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or to marry a woman, his emigration was for what he emigrated for.”** (Bukhari)

Allamah Khattabi (Allah have mercy upon him) states it was the practise of the pious predecessors when authoring a book to start with the above Hadith. AbdulRehman ibn Mahdi (Allah have mercy upon him) used to say, “Those who wish to write a book should write this Hadith first. If not, at least recite this Hadith before writing.” He further says, “If I were to author a book, I would write this Hadith at the beginning of every chapter.” This would be so that if his intention changed during the process of writing the book, it can be rectified. Mulla Ali Qari (Allah have mercy upon him) has stated a similar quote and Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) put this Hadith first for the same reason.

I have heard Shaykh Muhammad Saleem Saheb Dhorat (Allah lengthen his shadow) comment in a lecture of Bukhari Shareef that, many Ulama say this hadith is 25% of our religion.

Prophet Ibraheem ﷺ

As Muslims around the world arrive for the sacred Hajj pilgrimage or prepare for fasting, prayer and charitable giving during the Dhul Hijjah period, we must remind ourselves of the story behind Hajj. It all begins with our father, Prophet Ibraheem ﷺ one of the greatest of God's creations. His life was filled with tribulations, all of which we can learn from, and through which Prophet Ibraheem ﷺ became an exemplar for mankind. Through his sincere submission and unflinching faith, he came to be known as The Friend of Allah ﷺ.

A Prophet is born

In the kingdom of Babylon, idols were worshipped as though they were gods. Ibraheem's ﷺ father Azar was a well-known sculptor and he would craft idols from stone or wood. As a child, Ibraheem would watch his father work, often using the finished idols as playthings. Ibraheem ﷺ couldn't understand why people were worshipping these ornaments of stone in the temples. His father explained that the statues represented gods and people would offer them food and other gifts whilst asking for favours. This explanation didn't satisfy Ibraheem ﷺ in his heart, he felt that it was wrong. As he grew older, Ibraheem ﷺ became even more convinced that the idols his people worshipped were false. He would often question, 'how could statues of wood and stone be gods?' Considering the statues would have no power to either benefit or harm, being mere objects.

Ibraheem ﷺ hears the voice of God

One night, Ibraheem ﷺ travelled up to a mountain to watch the sky and observe nature. A while later, Ibraheem ﷺ heard a voice calling him – it was none other than his Lord, Allah. He commanded Ibraheem ﷺ to submit and become a Muslim. Trembling, Ibraheem ﷺ fell to the

ground. He prostrated himself before Allah, crying out: "I submit to the Lord of the universe!"

Eventually, he got to his feet and made his way back home. Ibraheem's ﷺ life was forever transformed – and his heart was filled with great peace.

Ibraheem ﷺ tries to spread the word of Allah

Ibraheem ﷺ now had a brand new mission – to call his people to the Truth and help them accept Allah as their one true God. First, he turned to his father whom he loved so dearly.

Angrily, his father rejected Ibraheem's ﷺ request and told his son to get out of his sight. Undeterred, Ibraheem ﷺ decided to channel his efforts towards bringing the people of his town towards the message of Allah, but they rejected his words and threatened him with violence. Ibraheem was given the inspiration to adopt a different approach to change the hearts and minds of his people.

Ibraheem's ﷺ plan

On the eve of a big celebration, Ibraheem ﷺ knew that the townsfolk would be leaving to share a huge feast. When they had left, Ibraheem went into their temple to carry out a prophetic mission: to demolish their idols, except one, the largest idol, so that he could explain to them the error of their ways.

When the townspeople returned, they were horrified. Their idols lay in ruins. They quickly remembered that Ibraheem ﷺ had been encouraging them to worship Allah alone and to submit to the monotheistic faith of Ibraheem ﷺ. They asked him: "Are you the one who has done this?" Ibraheem said, "No! This statue, the biggest of them all has done it! Ask them about it!" The townspeople replied: "You know they cannot speak!" And Ibraheem said: "Then how can

you worship things that can neither speak nor see. They can't even protect themselves. Have you all lost your minds?"

They were silent, knowing that Ibraheem ﷺ had made a valid point, but their pride wouldn't allow them to reject the idols they'd been worshipping for generations. Anger surged in the crowd.

The miracle of the fire

The crowd bayed for Ibraheem ﷺ to be burned. They wanted revenge for the damage to their idols and only Ibraheem's ﷺ blood would do. The decision to burn him alive was sanctioned by Namrood, the king of Babylon, and his priests. News travelled fast and thousands of people from all over the kingdom arrived to witness the execution. A huge pit was dug in the ground and filled with wood. It was the biggest fire anyone had ever seen. Ibraheem ﷺ was shackled, his hands and feet chained tightly together, and he was fitted into a giant catapult that would throw him in the fire. At that moment, Ibraheem was visited by the Angel Jibreel, who said: "Is there anything you wish for?"

Ibraheem ﷺ replied that his only wish was for Allah to be pleased with him. He could've asked for anything, but instead of begging for his life to be saved, he chose to ask for the blessing of God.

Allah would not allow the Prophet ﷺ to be executed. He ordered the fire to be nothing but cool and peaceful for Ibraheem ﷺ and the fire obeyed, burning only Ibraheem's ﷺ chains. Ibraheem ﷺ walked out of the fire without a bead of sweat upon his skin or hint of smoke coming from his clothing. Spectators gasped in amazement, crying: "Ibraheem's ﷺ God has saved him from the flames!"

Moral

We can see from this story that the Prophet Ibraheem ﷺ was brave enough to stand up against his father and the whole town to prove the oneness of Allah. As a young boy, Ibraheem ﷺ was blessed with

wisdom and courage to understand the difference between right and wrong. Sometimes, we may also have to face difficulties with our family, they may be on the wrong track, our parents may be committing haram and we must correct them and refute them with wisdom and patience.

“Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate from justice. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then know that Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do.”

(4:135)

Prophet Ibraheem ؑ & Namrood

Zaid ibn Aslam (Allah have mercy upon him) related that Namrood had great supplies of food, and people would go to seek provision from him. Prophet Ibraheem ؑ was one of those who went to him, and between him and Namrood there took place the famous debate that Allah related in the Qur'an: *"Have you not looked at the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord (Allah), because Allah had given him a kingdom? When Abraham said (to him), 'My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death.' He said, 'I give life and cause death.' Abraham said, 'Indeed, Allah causes the sun to rise from the East; so cause it to rise from the West.' So the disbeliever was utterly dumbfounded. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people."* (2:258)

Namrood didn't give Ibraheem ؑ any food, so on his way home he went to a sand-hill and filled two sacks with dirt to preoccupy his family. When he returned home, he put down his possessions and then leaned on something and fell asleep. His wife, Sarah, went to the two sacks and found them to be filled with good food. With that food, she began to cook. When Ibraheem ؑ woke up, he was surprised to find the food that she had prepared. He said, "Where did you get this from?" She said, "From the food that you brought with you." Ibraheem ؑ knew that it was Allah who provided that provision for them. Then Allah sent an angel to the aforesaid tyrant king (Namrood), ordering him to believe in Allah, but he refused. The angel called him to believe a second time, and he refused again; then a third time, and still he refused.

The angel said, "Gather your armies and I will gather mine." Namrood gathered his army together at the time of sunrise, and Allah sent to him mosquitoes, so many, that the people of the army could not even

“Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allah even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allah is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate from justice. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then know that Allah is certainly All-Aware of what you do.”

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see the sun. Then Allah gave power to the mosquitoes over them: they ate their flesh and blood, leaving them as decomposed bones. One of those mosquitoes entered into the nostrils of the king (Namrood). Allah punished him by it, and he was in so much pain that he would continually hit his head against objects (hoping to make the mosquito exit or simply because of sheer madness that resulted from the pain) until he finally died.

Moral

This story reminds us of the narration of the Prophet ﷺ in which he said: "If you rely on Allah with due reliance, Allah will provide for you as He does for the birds; they leave with empty stomachs in the morning and return full at dusk." In this story is a sign of Allah's power in which He removed the tyrant Namrood by one of the weakest creatures, the mosquito. There is also another benefit in that Namrood didn't believe even when an angel called him to believe, this is an important point to reflect upon as many non-Muslims asked our Prophet ﷺ "Why doesn't an angel appear before me if your religion is true?" We say that even if an angel appeared before you if your heart is sealed like Namrood's then you still won't believe.

“O you who have attained faith, be mindful of Allah and speak for justice.”

(33:70)

Prophet Ayyub ﷺ

Ibn Ishâq (Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet Ayyub (Job) ﷺ was Roman. His lineage was Ayyub Ibn Moos Ibn Razih Ibn 'Ees ibn Ishaq Ibn Ibraheem (the Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon them all). However, others said that his lineage was Ayyub ibn Moos ibn Ra'ooel ibn 'Ees ibn Ishâq ibn Ya'qoob (the peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all).

Ibn Asakir reported that his mother was the daughter of Loot ﷺ. It is said that his father was among those who believed in Ibraheem ﷺ on the day he was thrown in the fire and was to be burnt but survived. However, of all these opinions, the first opinion is the most popular because he was from the progeny of Ibraheem ﷺ. This is seen in the saying of Allah:

"... and from his offspring Dawood, Sulaymân, Ayyub, Yusuf, Moosa and Hâroon..." (6:84)

In this verse, the pronoun 'his' is referring to Ibraheem ﷺ and not Nooh ﷺ.

Allah said: **"And Ayyub, when he called to his Lord, saying 'Harm has inflicted me and You are the Most Merciful.' So We answered him and removed his affliction and We gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us and a reminder to Worshippers."** (21:83-84)

And in Surah Sâad:

"And mention Our slave Ayyub when he called his Lord, 'The Shaytân has afflicted me with distress and torment.' [Allah said], 'Strike with your foot, this is [a spring of] water to wash in, cool and a [refreshing] drink.' And We gave him his family and the like thereof,

as a mercy from Us and a reminder to those who understand.' And take in your hand a bundle of thin grass and strike therewith and do not break your oath.' Truly, We found him patient. How excellent a slave. Verily, he was ever oft-returning in repentance." (38:41-44)

Qur'anic exegetes, historians and others said that Ayyub ﷺ was a wealthy man who owned all kinds of wealth such as cattle, sheep, servants and vast property in a place called Hoorân. He also had many children and a large family. Then all of this was taken away from him. His body was inflicted with different kinds of diseases to such an extent that no part of his body was healthy except his heart and tongue with which he remembered Allah. Throughout this, he remained patient and remembered Allah all the time, during the night and day, and in the morning and the evening.

His illnesses prolonged for such a long time that even his friends deserted him and his relatives stayed away from him. He was expelled from his town and thrown upon a dunghill. Everybody left him except his wife who fulfilled her duties. She did this because of the many good times she had with him and due to her compassion for him. She used to come to him and help him out in his necessities. It came to such an extent that she became weak and her money almost finished. She was in such a difficult situation that she started working to earn wages in order to provide for her husband. She remained patient with him even through his illness and when they were inflicted with loss of money and children. May Allah be pleased with her.

It is established in an authentic hadith that the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The most severely tried among the people are the Prophets. Then after them the righteous and then the likes and so on." And He ﷺ said: **"And man is put to trial according to the strength of his religion thus if his religion was strong, his trial increased."**

(Ahmad, vol 1, p. 172)

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Imam Mujahid (Allah have mercy upon him) is reported to have said that the Prophet Ayyub ﷺ was the first to be afflicted by smallpox. Historians and scholars differ with regards to the length of time he suffered. Imam Wahb ibn Munâbbih (Allah have mercy upon him) said that he suffered for three years, not more not less. Anas (Allah be pleased with him) on the other hand, said that he suffered for about seven years and a few months. Humayd (Allah have mercy upon him) said that the period was eighteen years. The severity of the disease has been described by Imam Suddi that it was so severe, that his flesh dropped from his body and nothing remained on him except his bones and muscles. His wife used to bring ashes and spread it under his body. When the trial went for long, she said, "O' Ayyub, if you pray to your Lord, He will free you from this suffering." He answered, "I have lived for seventy years as a healthy person, so can I not be patient for Allah for another seventy years?" She worked for people to earn money in order to feed Ayyub ﷺ. (Tafseer at-Tabari, vol 23 p.107)

However, the people then started to be cautious of her and did not employ her because they knew that she was the wife of Ayyub ﷺ and because of that, they too might get infected by the same illnesses or be put to the same trial. So when she did not find anybody to give work, she went to some of the daughters of high society and sold one of her plaits in return for plenty of food. When she came to Ayyub ﷺ with food, he asked her where did she get the food from. He showed his disapproval but she said, "I worked for the people." The following day she did not find anyone who gave her work so she sold the other plait in return for food. She then brought it to Ayyub ﷺ. This time Ayyub ﷺ swore that he would not eat the food till she tells him from where she has got it. At that, she removed her headscarf. When Ayyub ﷺ saw her head had been shaved, he supplicated to Allah:

"And Ayyub when he called his Lord [saying], 'Harm has inflicted me and You are the Most Merciful.'" (21:83)

Imam Ibn Abi Hâtim (Allah have mercy upon him) reported on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Ubayd ibn Umayr (Allah have mercy upon him) who said: "Ayyub had two brothers. One day, they came to him but they could not go near him because of the bad smell which came from his body. So they stood at a distance and one of them said to another, 'If Allah knew any good in Ayyub, He would not have put him to this trial.' This grieved Ayyub ﷺ so much that he never got such grief before. He supplicated, 'O' Allah, if you know that I never spent a night with a full stomach if I knew someone hungry in that night, then prove me true.' So he was proved true and a voice came from heaven confirming his truth that was heard by the two brothers. He then supplicated further, 'O' Allah, if You know that I never had two shirts if I knew that someone did not have clothes, then prove me true.' Again, he was proved true from the heavens while the brothers were listening. Finally, he supplicated, 'O' Allah, I seek help from Your Honour.' When saying that, he fell in prostration and said, 'O' Allah, by Your Honour, I will never lift my head till you cure me of my suffering.' Then he did not lift his head till he was cured."

Imam Ibn Abi Hâtim (Allah have mercy upon him) reported on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbâs (Allah be pleased with him) who said:

"Allah dressed Ayyub ﷺ in a dress from Paradise, then he went aside and sat in a corner. His wife came and did not recognise her husband. So she asked, 'O' slave of Allah, where did the afflicted person go who was here? I am afraid that dogs or wolves have eaten him.' She kept speaking to Ayyub ﷺ for some time and then he finally said to her, 'What is wrong with you, I am Ayyub, Allah has indeed returned to me my body.'"

Ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) said: "Allah returned to him his wealth and children and others twice as many as them."

Imam Ibn Abi Hâtim (Allah have mercy upon him) reported that Wahb ibn Munabbih (Allah have mercy upon him) said: "Allah revealed, 'I returned to you your family and your wealth, and the like of them along with them. So take a bath from this water, for there is a cure for you in it and offer sacrifice on behalf of your companions and seek forgiveness for them for verily they disobeyed me concerning you.'"

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"When Allah cured Ayyub ﷺ He rained on him golden locusts. Ayyub began collecting them with his hands and putting them in his clothes. It was said to him, 'O' Ayyub, are you not satisfied and full?' He said, 'O' Lord, who will feel full from Your Mercy?'"**

In another narration on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet ﷺ:

"While Ayyub was bathing, golden locusts dropped on him, so he began collecting them in his clothes. So his Lord called him, 'O' Ayyub, did I not give you enough, so what do you do?' Ayyub said, 'Yes my Lord but there is no sparing from your blessings for me.'"

"Strike with your foot" was the divine order. So Ayyub ﷺ did as ordained and struck the earth with his leg. Allah then caused a cold spring of water to gush forth and ordered him to take a bath and drink from it. Allah then removed his suffering and pain, his illnesses and diseases that were both visible and hidden on his body and replaced all that with a healthy body, both visible and hidden. Allah also made him handsome and gave him abundant wealth, to the extent that golden locusts rained on him.

Allah said: **"And take in your hand a bundle of reeds and strike with it, and do not break your oath. And We found him patient, a good slave, verily he was patient."** (38:44)

This speaks about Allah's mercy upon Ayyub ﷺ when Ayyub ﷺ had sworn that he would whip his wife one hundred lashes. It is said that he made the oath because she sold her plaits. It is also said that Shaytân came to her disguised as a doctor (physician) and described to her some medicines for Ayyub. When she came and informed Ayyub, he knew it was Shaytân and subsequently swore that he would whip her one hundred lashes.

When Allah cured him, He told him to take a bundle of reeds, bunch them together as one and then to hit her only once. This one hit was considered one hundred, thus he could fulfil his oath this way. This was a way out and relief for the one who feared Allah and obeyed Him, especially with respect to his wife who bore his illness patiently and had hope. She was a pious, righteous and rightly guided woman. Allah be pleased with her.

Allah also returned his family as He said, **"We gave to him his family and the like of them with them."** (21:84)

It is said that Allah brought his children back to life. Some others said that Allah gave him other people in place of those who had died. In the Hereafter Allah will gather them all together. With regards the part of the verse, **"A mercy from us,"** (21:83-84) it means that Allah removed his hardships and cured him from whatever he had as a mercy and grace.

The end of the verse, **"And a reminder to worshippers"** means that what happened to Ayyub ﷺ is a reminder and a lesson for all those who are put to trial concerning their bodies, wealth, and family. All such people should take the example of the Prophet of Allah, Ayyub ﷺ who was tried by Allah with something greater than what others would be inflicted with and despite that, he was patient and had hope that Allah would cure him of that.

Ayyub ؑ lived in the Roman land for a further seventy years after his affliction. He preached to them the religion of Monotheism, One God. However, after his death they changed the religion.

Imam Ibn Jareer (Allah have mercy upon him) and others mentioned that when Ayyub ؑ died, he was ninety-three years old. Some others said that he lived longer than that. Before he passed away, he entrusted his mission to his son Hawmal and after him to his other son Bishr. Many people claim that he was Dhul Kifl and Allah knows best.

Moral

The story of Prophet Ayyub ؑ is one which is filled with lessons for us to ponder over. The virtue of patience and courage is shown to us in the Prophet Ayyub ؑ through some of the direst situations that one can come across in life. We must also remember and reflect if we want to be close to Allah, trials and tests will come from Him. Be patient and steadfast, hold on tight to the rope of Allah. Many of us around the world are going through some sort of illness and sickness, be it medical or spiritual. These things tear a person's life apart. Such people need to ponder and contemplate on the life of Ayyub ؑ and take solace in knowing that Allah is with you, He will not desert you, He does not sleep nor slumber.

**“Seek comfort
in patience and
prayer. Allah is
truly with those
who are patient.”**

(2:153)

Prophet Dawud ﷺ

From the story of Prophet Musa ﷺ we learned how the Banu Israeel escaped from Egypt, and were left wandering in the desert around Palestine. Dawud ﷺ was of the people of Banu Israeel. When he was still very young, he joined the army of Banu Israeel who were planning to fight the people of Jerusalem so that they could enter the holy land and live there. At that time, the people of Jerusalem were a strong and battle-hardened group of people called the Philistines.

The Banu Israeel were scared of fighting the Philistines; they had only a few hundred soldiers on their side and the Philistine army had thousands. The leader of the Philistine army was a huge and fiercely strong man called Jalut, or Goliath. The Banu Israeel were terrified when they saw Jalut's strength and size. But Dawud ﷺ was incredibly brave, even though he was still so young. He stepped forward and said "I will fight Jalut." The leader of the army said, "You are too young." He was reluctant to let Dawud ﷺ fight Jalut and asked his soldiers if anyone else would volunteer. When no one else stepped forward, the leader finally agreed to let Dawud ﷺ fight Jalut.

When Jalut saw Dawud ﷺ come towards him, he exclaimed "I will not fight such a young and weak boy." Dawud ﷺ had no sword or spear, not even a shield. He only had a slingshot as a weapon. He prayed to Allah and asked for His help. Then he was ready to fight. Dawud ﷺ loaded the slingshot with a small stone. He pulled the sling back as far as it would go, aimed, and released it.

The small stone went zooming through the air and hit Jalut directly on his forehead. Jalut fell to the ground with a thunderous noise, dead. A young boy, armed with nothing but a slingshot and a small stone asked for Allah's help and defeated the mighty warrior Jalut, leader of the Philistines! The Banu Israeel then fought the Philistine army and won

the battle, even though they had fewer soldiers. Dawud ﷺ, his family and his friends finally entered the blessed city of Jerusalem.

Moral

I have always remembered this story since I was a young boy in primary school, even though I heard the biblical version then. The story is brimming with Iman and trust in Allah SWT, from a young boy so tender in age. We must also teach our boys to have faith in Allah SWT alone, they must learn to stand up to bullies and the tyrants of the time. It's not always about physical strength, the young boy Dawud only had a slingshot but defeated a mighty warrior. Islamic history repeatedly shows Muslims didn't always have greater numbers and mighty strength. Rather, it was the faith in Allah that made them victorious.

**“Let the believers put
their trust in Allah.”**

(3:122)

The Boy and the Magician

Ṣuḥaib (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "There lived a king before you and he had a court magician. As he (the magician) grew old, he said to the king: "I have grown old, so send me a boy to teach him magic."

The king sent him a boy to serve the purpose and on his way (to the magician), the boy met a monk to whom he listened to and liked.

It then became his habit that on his way to the magician, he would meet the monk and stay with him and when he arrived late the magician would beat him because of this delay. The boy complained about this to the monk, who said to him, "When you feel afraid of the magician, say, members of my family had delayed me. And when you fear your family, say, the magician delayed me."

One day, a huge beast came and it blocked the way of the people, and the boy said: "I will know today whether the magician or the monk is better." He picked up a stone and said: "O Allah if the monk is dearer to You than the magician, bring about death to this beast so that the people be able to move about freely." He threw that stone at the beast and killed it and the people began to move about freely. He then came to the monk and told him the story. The monk said: "Son, today you are superior to me. You have come to a stage where I feel that you would be soon put to a trial, and in case you are put to a trial, do not reveal anything about me."

Over time the boy began to heal those born blind and the vitiligo stricken and he began to cure people of all kinds of illnesses. When a courtier of the king who had gone blind heard about him, he came to him with numerous gifts and said, "If you cure me, all these things will

be yours." He replied, "I do not cure anyone. It is Allah, the Exalted, alone who cures; if you affirm faith in Allah, I shall also supplicate to Allah to cure you." This courtier affirmed his faith in Allah and Allah cured him. He then came to the king and sat by his side as he used to sit before. The king asked him, "Who restored your eyesight?" He replied, "My Lord." Thereupon the king said, "Do you have another lord besides me?" The courtier replied, "My Lord and your Lord is Allah." This enraged the king and he tortured him until he told him about the boy.

The boy was thus summoned and the king said to him, "O boy, it has been conveyed to me that you have become so proficient in your magic that you cure the blind and the vitiligo stricken and you do such and such."

Thereupon he said, "I do not cure anyone; it is Allah alone who cures." The king grabbed hold of him and began to torture him until he told him about the monk.

The monk was summoned and the king demanded from him, "You should turn back from your religion." But he refused, and so the king sent for a saw, placed it in the middle of his head and cut him into two parts that fell down. Then the courtier of the king was brought forward and it was said to him, "Turn back from your religion." He, too, refused, and the saw was placed amid his head and he was torn into two parts. Then the boy was brought to him and it was said to him: "Turn back from your religion." But he refused.

The king then handed him over to a group of his courtiers and said to them, "Take him to such and such mountain; make him climb up that mountain and when you reach its peak ask him to renounce his faith. If he refuses to do so, push him to his death."

So they took him and made him climb up the mountain and he supplicated, "O Allah, save me from them in any way you like." Suddenly, the mountain began to shake and they all fell to their death and the boy came walking to the king.

The king asked him shockingly, "What happened to your companions?" He calmly replied, "Allah has saved me from them." He handed him to some of his courtiers and said: "Take him and carry him in a boat and when you reach the middle of the sea, ask him to renounce his religion. If he does not renounce his religion throw him in."

So they took him and the boy supplicated, "O Allah, save me from them." The boat turned upside down and they all drowned except the boy who came walking back to the king.

The king angrily shouted, "What happened to your companions?" He proclaimed, "Allah has saved me from them" and he said to the king: "You cannot kill me until you do what I command you to do." The king asked: "What is that?"

He said: "Gather all people in one place and tie me up to the trunk of a tree, then take an arrow from my quiver and say, In the Name of Allah, the Lord of the boy; then shoot me. If you do that you will be able to kill me."

The king called the people in an open field and tied the boy to the trunk of a tree. He took out an arrow from his quiver, fixed in the bow and said: "In the Name of Allah, the Lord of the boy," he then shot the arrow and it hit the boy's temple. The boy placed his hand upon the temple where the arrow had hit him and died.

The people then shouted: "We believe in the Lord of this boy! We believe in the Lord of this boy!"

The king was told, "Do you see what you were afraid of, by Allah it has taken place; all people have believed." The king then commanded that trenches be dug and fire lit in them, and said, "He who will not turn back from his (the boy's) religion, throw him in the fire." They did so until a woman came with her child. She felt hesitant and fearful about jumping into the fire. But her child said to her, "O mother! Endure this ordeal for you are on the right path."

Moral

Subhan Allah! Another amazing story of a young boy overflowing with reliance and faith in Allah SWT. His death led to hundreds of people believing in Allah SWT. This is the passion and fervour we want to see in the Muslim youth today. Live and die for Allah SWT and when you die, make your death a means of guidance for many. We should constantly think about death; the breaker of desires, instead of wasting our youth and valuable time and energy in fruitless pursuits. Let us be candles of guidance that fuel the divine light in the hearts of others.

“Allah has decreed, I and My messengers will certainly prevail. Surely Allah is All-Powerful, Almighty.”

(58:21)

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(58:21)

Pharaoh and the Hairdresser

It was narrated that Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) said,

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "On the night on which I was taken on the Night Journey (Isra'), a beautiful fragrance came to me. I said, 'O Jibreel, what is this beautiful fragrance?' He said, 'This is the fragrance of the hairdresser of Pharaoh's daughter and her children.' I said, 'What is their story?'

Jibreel said, 'Whilst she was combing the hair of Pharaoh's daughter one day, the iron comb fell from her hand and she said, 'Bismillah (in the name of Allah).' The daughter of Pharaoh said, 'My father?' She replied, 'No. My Lord and the Lord of your father is Allah.' The daughter then remarked, 'I will tell him about that.' So she told Pharaoh and he summoned her, 'O So and so, do you have a Lord other than me?' She replied boldly, 'Yes, my Lord and your Lord is Allah.' He ordered that a cow made of copper be heated up, then he ordered that she and her children be thrown into it.

Before her punishment she requested a final wish. She said: 'I would like my bones and my children's bones to be gathered together in one cloth and buried.' He said, 'This will be done for you.' He ordered that her children be thrown into it in front of her, one by one, until they came to the last one who was an infant boy who was still being breastfed. It was as if she wavered because of him, but her son said, 'O mother, go ahead, for the punishment of this world is easier to bear than the punishment of the hereafter!' So she went ahead."

Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) said, ***"Four infants spoke - 'Eesa ibn Maryam ﷺ, the companion of Jurayj, the witness of Yusuf ﷺ and the son of the hairdresser of Pharaoh's daughter."***

Narrated by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad (1/309), al-Tabarani (12280).

Moral

This is a fascinating story of a brave and courageous woman who held on firmly to her faith in the face of the most tyrannical, evil and oppressive men in the history of mankind. Imagine her determination and strong will-power fortified by her anchored trust, reliance and belief in Allah, that even when her young and helpless children were thrown in the scalding heat, her motherly instincts and deep love did not overpower her trust in Allah. Naturally, Allah has placed an unmatched love within every mother for her child(ren); whatever colour, caste, creed, including creatures in the animal kingdom, we will find the mothers amongst them having a fiercely possessive and defensive nature for their children. However, here we see how this resilient mother is able to keep her eyes on the hereafter and her focus on Allah and His reward for her and her children.

Pharaoh and the Hairdresser

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“Allah has one hundred parts of mercy, of which He sent down one between the jinn, mankind, the animals and the insects, by means of which they are compassionate and merciful to one another, and by means of which wild animals are kind to their offspring. And Allah has kept back ninety-nine parts of mercy with which to be merciful to His slaves of the Day of Resurrection.”

(Saheeh Muslim)

The People of the Cave

After its brief opening, Surah Al-Kahf (The Cave, Surah 18) speaks about the people of the cave, depicting the effect faith has on believers, giving us reassurance and inner peace. Hence, we prefer faith over all material riches and pleasures. When the people of the cave found it hard to live as believers within their community, they sought refuge in a cave where they receive Allah's care and protection.

There are countless reports that speak about the sleepers in the cave, and just as many versions of their story. However, we have no use for any of these; we will confine ourselves to what the Qur'an tells us about them as it is the only source that provides true information. There may be other reports that have found their way into books of commentary on the Qur'an, but we will disregard all these as they lack proof of authenticity. In this we rely on good counsel, because the *surah* contains an order prohibiting argument concerning the people of the cave and reference to any source other than the Qur'an in trying to establish the truth about them.

It is reported that the reason for the revelation of this story and that of Dhul-Qarnayn, related later in the *surah*, is that the Jews persuaded the people of Makkah to put to the Prophet ﷺ questions concerning them, and also concerning the Rooh (spirit). It is also said that the people of Makkah themselves asked the Jews to prepare some questions for them to test whether Muhammad ﷺ was a true Prophet. This may be partially or totally true, especially since the account giving the history of Dhul-Qarnayn begins with,

“They will ask you about Dhul-Qarnayn. Say: I will give you an account of him.” (18: 83)

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related, since it is clearly relevant to the main theme of the *surah*. The structure of the story begins with a short summary before its narration in detail. It is shown in a series of scenes with some gaps left in between. Nevertheless, all omissions are clearly understood.

The story begins as follows: *Do you think that the people of the cave and the inscription were a wonder among Our signs? When those youths took refuge in the cave, they said: 'Our Lord! Bestow on us Your grace, and provide for us right guidance in our affair.' So We drew a veil over their ears in the cave, for a number of years, and then We awakened them so that We might mark out which of the two parties managed to calculate the time they had remained in that state.* (18: 9-12)

This sums up the whole story showing its main lines and features. We learn from it that the people of the cave were youngsters, whose number is not mentioned, and that they went to the cave to isolate themselves from their community because they believed in Allah. We also learn that they were made to sleep in the cave for a number of years, which is not stated here, before they were aroused from their long slumber. We are told of two groups arguing about them, so they were awakened to make clear which of the two groups calculated their stay in the cave better. We are clearly told that, strange as their history is, it is not particularly marvellous among the miracles and signs given by Allah.

The youngsters are referred to in the *surah* as *"The people of the cave and the inscription."* A cave is a natural chamber in a mountain or under rocky ground, while the inscription refers, most probably, to the record of their names which was, perhaps, the one hung at the entrance of the cave, where they were eventually found. After this summary which heightens our interest in the story, the *surah* begins by stating that the account about to be given is the whole truth concerning their affair:

"We shall relate to you their story in all truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord, so We increased them in guidance."

We put courage in their hearts, so that they stood up and said: 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never shall we call upon any deity other than Him. If we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity!'

These people of ours have taken for worship deities other than Him, without being able to show any convincing proof of their beliefs. Who does more wrong than he who invents a lie about Allah?

Hence, now that you have withdrawn from them and all that they worship instead of Allah, take refuge in the cave. Allah may well spread His grace over you and make fitting arrangements for you in your affairs." (18: 13-16)

This is the first scene. The believing youngster were increased in guidance in order to be able to manage their affairs with their community. Along with this increased guidance, *"We put courage in their hearts"* to make them solid in their attitude, firm in their belief in the truth, proud of the faith they had chosen.

Then we are informed that *"they stood up,"* which signifies a movement indicating resolve and firmness. *"They stood up and said: 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth.'" (18:14)* He is indeed the Creator, Lord and Sustainer of the whole universe.

"Never shall we call upon any deity other than Him" (Al-Kahf 18:14) for He is the One without partners of any sort. We make this pledge, because if we were to call upon anyone else, *"we should indeed have uttered an enormity!" (18:14)* We would have gone beyond all proper limits and been in total error.

They then turn to the prevailing situation among their people and express their rejection of it. They were clear that what their people do has no foundation whatsoever:

"These people of ours have taken for worship deities other than Him, without being able to show any convincing proof of their beliefs." (18:15)

Indeed any faith should be founded on solid evidence of the truth. Without such proof, it is utter fabrication and what is worse is that such falsehood is asserted in relation to Allah Himself: ***"Who does more wrong than he who invents a lie about Allah?"*** (18:15)

Up to this point, the attitude of the youngsters appears to be clear, open and straightforward. They were resolute in their adoption of the faith, betraying no hesitation whatsoever. Indeed, they were shown to be very strong physically and mentally, and strong in their faith and in their rejection of the way followed by their community.

Here they were talking about two vastly different ways of life. There can be no meeting point between the two, and there can be no participation by these young believers in the life of their community. They had no choice but to flee in order to protect their faith. They were not prophets able to present to their community the true faith, calling on them to accept it. They were simply a group of young people who had been able to discern the right path out of a bleak, unbelieving environment.

Should they have stood up in public to declare their faith, they might well not have been able to withstand the pressure on them to abandon it. Nor could they resort to pretence and avoidance, appearing to concur with their people while worshipping God in secret. Furthermore, it appears that, most probably, their secret was found out. Hence they had no option but to flee, seeking Allah's protection and support.

As the young believers came to the conclusion that they had to leave their homes and families and live in a cave to protect their faith, they immediately put this decision into effect,

"Hence, now that you have withdrawn from them and all that they worship instead of Allah, take refuge in the cave. Allah may well spread His grace over you and make fitting arrangements for you in your affairs." (18:16)

They preferred life in the cave to all the attractions that their society offered.

The surprise here is great indeed. These young believers, who had abandoned their people and families, forsaking all the pleasures of this life and preferring instead to sleep rough in a small dark cave, began to sense Allah's grace. They feel it coming: easy, comforting, abundant, and limitless. This comfort spread over them to change the quality of their life in the cave,

"Allah may well spread His grace over you." (18:16)

Thus, the cave becomes a wide expanse, where Allah's grace is bestowed in abundance to change their whole outlook on life and bring about peace and contentment. The solid, rocky walls of the cave were made to overlook a wide horizon, and loneliness in the cave was totally dispelled, for Allah had spread His grace over their young hearts and He takes care of them, arranging their security.

This is an aspect of what firm faith can bring to a person. All that people may value and all their concepts with regard to life and happiness do not matter, when a human heart is full of faith. A faithful heart sees a totally different world, where Allah's mercy and favour emanates reassurance and genuine happiness.

Hence, whatever of turn events may happen it should be accepted, because the total result is comforting and fitting for one's life in this world and in the life to come. ***"Allah may well spread His grace over you and make fitting arrangements for you in your affairs. (18:16)***

With these young people proceeding to the cave, the story moves on to the next scene. Now we see them settled in the cave, overtaken by sleep,

"You might have seen the sun, on its rising, incline away from their cave on the right, and, on its setting, turn away from them on the left, while they lay in a space within.

That was one of Allah's signs. He whom God guides is indeed rightly guided, but for him whom He lets go astray you can never find any protector who would point out the right way.

You would have thought that they were awake, when they were certainly asleep. And We turned them over repeatedly, now to the right, now to the left; and their dog lay at the cave's entrance, with its forepaws outstretched.

Had you come upon them, you would have certainly turned away from them in flight, and would surely have been filled with terror of them." (18:17-18)

This is a remarkable scene. Not only do we see how the young men looked and what they were doing, we have a picture full of life, with the sun rising, but deliberately moving away from their cave. The word used here, ***'inclining away'***, imparts a sense of deliberate action taken for a particular purpose. Again, when it is time for the sun to move in the other direction before it sets, it turns away to the left so that their cave remains unseen. All the while, they lay in a space within.

Before completing its description of the scene, the surah makes a familiar Qur'anic comment which draws people's attentions to a particular aspect of faith that is relevant at that particular point: ***"That was one of Allah's signs."*** (18:17) It was indeed a great sign, something highly remarkable. They were put in a cave where they could not see the sun, nor its rays. It gave them neither light nor warmth. They remained in their position, alive but motionless.

"He whom Allah guides is indeed rightly guided, but for him whom He lets go astray you can never find any protector who would point out the right way." (18:17)

There is a certain divine law that determines who may receive Allah's guidance and which are left in error. When a person looks at Allah's signs and accepts what they indicate, that person finds Allah's guidance in accordance with His law. Hence, he is ***'indeed rightly guided.'*** (18:17) But whoever turns his back on these signs and refuses to understand the message they impart, then according to Allah's law, they are bound to go astray. Hence he is left in error and will have none to guide him.

The surah goes on to show the young people asleep in their cave. They were turned from one side to another in their very long slumber. Anyone looking at them would think they were awake when they were fast asleep. Their dog remained at the entrance to the cave, stretching his forepaws like dogs normally do when they rest. He took the position normally taken by a guard dog. The whole scene would fill any onlooker with terror so as to put them to flight. He would find people looking as though they were awake but in reality were asleep, unable to wake or move. This was all Allah's arrangement, protecting them, until the time He chose for their awakening.

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"Such being their state, We awakened them; and they began to question one another.

One of them asked: 'How long have you remained thus?'

They answered: 'We have remained thus a day, or part of a day.'

They said 'Your Lord knows best how long you have remained thus. Let, then, one of you go with these silver coins to the town, and let him find out what food is purest there, and bring you some of it. But let him behave with great care and by no means make anyone aware of you. For, indeed, if they should come to know of you, they might stone you to death or force you back to their faith, in which case you would never attain to any good!'" (18:19-20)

The element of surprise is always used in Qur'anic stories in order to enhance the effect. Here the scene portrays the young men as they awakened from their long slumber. They did not realise how long they had been asleep. They rubbed their eyes and began to ask one another about what had happened.

One turned to the others asking how long they have been asleep for, just like anyone rising after having slept for many hours. He must have felt his sleep had been unduly long. The answer he received from his friends is indefinite, *"We have remained thus a day, or part of a day."* (18:19)

But then they realised that to determine the length of their sleep is of no matter. They left that point aside, just like a believer should do in any matter of no specific importance. They turned to something more practical. They were hungry and had some money and so their discussion took a different turn,

They said, 'Your Lord knows best how long you have remained thus. Let, then, one of you go with these silver coins to the town, and let

him find out what food is purest there, and bring you some of it.' (18:19)

The most natural reaction in the circumstances - one is to go to the city to bring back the best food available for them.

They were, however, in an unusual position, and they had to be extra careful. They were not to allow their people to find them out or discover their hiding place, for that would certainly bring disaster; the people in authority in the city would stone them to death for their apostasy.

These young men worshipped Allah alone, associating no partners with Him, while their people were pagans. Hence they were sure to kill them or at least to torture them until they renounced their belief in Allah and turn back to the faith of their community. These were the only options their people would consider. Hence the young believers re-emphasised their advice to their friend who was going to the city to bring the food,

"But let him behave with great care and by no means make anyone aware of you. For, indeed, if they should come to know of you, they might stone you to death or force you back to their faith, in which case you would never attain to any good!'" (18: 19-20)

Indeed, no one who turns back to disbelief in Allah and associates partners with Him could ever attain any good result. How could it be possible when he has incurred the greatest loss through disbelieving in Allah's oneness?

We are given here a panoramic view of the whole scene. The youngsters were unaware of how much time had passed or how many years they remained in the cave. Indeed, generations had passed by, and the city from which they had departed have gone through great changes. The tyrants they feared had been removed from power. Yet,

the story of these young people who had fled in order to maintain their faith had been reported from one generation to another, with people differing as to their faith and what they believed in, as well as the exact timing of their escape. The awakened sleepers were totally unaware of all these events.

The *Surah*, however, allows the curtain to fall over this scene only to raise it again showing a totally different picture, with a time lapse between the two. We understand that the present population of the city believed in Allah. They were so thrilled to discover the young believers through the one youngster who was sent to fetch food.

The people in the city somehow ascertained that he was one of the young men who have fled from the tyranny of the disbelievers a long time ago. We, the readers, need to stretch our imaginations to realise the magnitude of the young men's surprise as they heard from their friend what had happened during their sleep. He assured them that the city had experienced a great change since their departure. There is now nothing in the new society that they could not accept.

Indeed, all that they had once known in that city is now totally different. They themselves have belonged to a generation that have long since gone. To the present people in the city, they were a marvel and thus, they were not to be treated like ordinary human beings. They were completely unrelated to the present generation; their relatives, friends, ties, concerns, feelings, habits and traditions had either been severed or undergone radical change. They were no more than a living memory, not real people. As a result, Allah spared them all that could result from their joining this new generation and therefore caused them to die.

All this is left to our imagination. The *Surah* portrays the final scene of their passing. After their death, the people are standing outside the cave, disputing among themselves about their faith, and how to

preserve their memory for future generations. The *Surah* moves directly to outline the moral of this remarkable story,

"In this way have We drawn people's attention to their case, so that they might know that Allah's promise is true and that there can be no doubt as to the Last Hour. The people disputed among themselves as to what happened to them. Some of them said, 'Erect a building (in their memory). Allah knows their case best.' Those whose opinion prevailed in the end said, 'Indeed, we must surely raise a house of worship (in their memory).'" (18: 21)

The lesson here is clear. The end they met shows a real, tangible example of how resurrection takes place. The people in the city had felt the full impact of resurrection and realised, as they could never have done otherwise, that Allah's promise in respect of resurrection after death will come true and that the Last Hour is certain to come. This is all seen in the awakening of the sleepers from their long sojourn in the cave.

Some people suggested that they should commemorate them: ***"Erect a building (in their memory)."*** (18:21)

But the people who enjoyed authority in the city decided differently. ***"Those whose opinion prevailed in the end said: 'Indeed, we must surely raise a house of worship (in their memory).'"*** (18:21) That is the way followed by Jews and Christians who used to erect temples over the graves of their saints and divines. Some Muslims today imitate their action in clear defiance of the Prophet's ﷺ teachings. In condemning this practice, the Prophet ﷺ once said, ***"May God curse the Jews and the Christians for they erected temples at the graves of their prophets and saints."*** (Ibn Kathir)

People normally relate reports and news, adding something here and omitting something there. They may invent some details, one generation after another. Thus, a simple story is told in different ways

as time passes. Hence, a disagreement about the number of young men in the cave continued for a long time.

Some will say, 'They were three, the fourth of them being their dog,' while others will say, 'Five, with their dog being the sixth of them,' idly guessing at the unknown. Yet others will say, 'They were seven, the eighth of them being their dog.' Say: My Lord knows best how many they were. None but a few have any real knowledge of them.

Hence, do not enter into argument about them, except on a matter that is clear, nor ask anyone of these people to enlighten you about them.' (18:22)

All such disputes about their number are useless. It is all the same whether they are three, five, seven or even more. Their case is left to Allah who knows all their details. There is no need, then, to go into an argument about their number, as the moral of their story may be drawn regardless.

The Qur'an directs the Prophet ﷺ not to engage in any dispute over the issue and not to question any party over their case. This is consistent with the Islamic approach which spares the human mind of all useless debate. A Muslim should not pursue anything that he cannot establish through true knowledge. This event, which took place a very long time ago, belongs to Allah's knowledge which is perfect. Hence, let us leave it there.

Submission to Allah's Will

In connection with the prohibition of dispute about unknown events of the past, an order is given not to pre-judge the future or its events.

It is impossible for man to know what may happen in the future. Hence, he should not give any definite judgement of it,

"Never say about anything, 'I shall do this tomorrow,' without adding, 'if Allah so wills.' Should you forget, then call your Lord to mind and say, 'I pray that my Lord will guide me even closer than this to what is right.'" (18:23-24)

Every action a human being does or omits to do, indeed every breath a human being takes, is subject to Allah's will. The curtains hiding the future are stretched in full so as to hide everything beyond the present moment. Our eyes cannot discern what is behind that curtain, and our minds are finite, no matter how advanced our knowledge may be. Hence, a human being must never say that he is definitely doing something tomorrow unless he attaches his intention to Allah's will. This is because tomorrow belongs to the realm that lies beyond the reach of human perception. As such, it is known only to Allah and we do not make any assertion about it.

This does not mean that man should be fatalistic, giving no thought to the future and making no plans for it. He should not live for the present moment, cutting himself off from his past and future. No, this is not what the directive implies.

Rather, what is implied is that every human being must make an allowance for what Allah may will in his case. He may intend to do whatever he wants, always seeking Allah's help, knowing that His will is in full control of everything. It may well be however, that Allah may decide something different to what he intends. Should Allah help him to put into effect what he intends, then all well and good. But if Allah's will moves in a different direction, he should not despair or be sad. All matters belong to Allah at the beginning and at the end.

What this means in practice is that every person should think and plan as they wish, but they must always remember to rely on Allah's help and guidance. They should realise and remember that they only have the faculties of thinking and deliberation Allah has given them. This

should not lead to laziness or disinterestedness. On the contrary, it should give us more strength, confidence, reassurance, and resolve.

Should events reveal that Allah's will has moved in a direction different to what we have planned, we should accept this with contentedness and reassurance. We submit to Allah's will, because it is beyond our knowledge until Allah makes it known.

This is the method Islam instils into the minds of its followers. Hence, a Muslim does not feel alone when he plans or thinks of the future. Neither does he show any conceit nor arrogance when he succeeds, nor is he overtaken by depression and despair when he fails. In all situations, he remembers Allah, feeling stronger for relying on Him, expressing gratitude to Him for his success, pleased with whatever Allah's will may determine.

"Should you forget, then call your Lord to mind." (18:24) This is what a Muslim should do when he forgets to relate his intentions to Allah's will. He should remember Allah and renew his reliance on Him. He should also hope to remain always conscious of Allah, turning to Him in all situations and all future actions, always saying: ***"I pray that my Lord will guide me even closer than this to what is right."*** (18:24)

This short prayer indicates that it is not so easy to always turn to Allah in all affairs, which is why the prayer is there to maintain it and improve on one's situation.

The Duration of Their Sleep

With all that has been said and told, we have still not been informed of the duration of the sleepers' stay in their cave. Now we are told for certain,

"So they stayed in their cave three hundred years, and [some] add nine years more. Say, 'Allah knows best how long they remained

there. His alone is the knowledge of the secrets of the heavens and earth. How well does He see and hear!" (18:25-26)

This is the truth of the length of their stay in the cave, given to us by the One who knows all secrets in the heavens and the earth. Well indeed, He sees and hears. Perfect is His knowledge. His statement puts an end to the matter, leaving no room for dispute.

A final comment is added about the whole story in which we see faith in Allah's oneness clearly apparent in all its details: ***"No guardian have they apart from Him; nor does He allot to anyone a share in His rule."*** (18:26)

This ends the story of the people of the cave. It is preceded and intermingled with guidance. Indeed stories are given in the Qur'an to add emphasis to such orders. The Qur'an maintains perfect harmony between its guidance and the way they are presented in the context of the story.*

Moral

A heart-warming story over packed with light and guidance, one of my personal favourites. I believe every British youngster should know this story and memorise it so they too can counter-attack the daily, growing challenges of the 21st century. They can be saviours of Islam and protect their Deen in such unprecedented times, just like the young men mentioned in this story. Allah willing, the youngsters who preserve their Iman in this day and age could also get the reward as the People of the Cave.

*Taken with slight modifications from In the Shade of the Qur'an. First Published in March 2014 by Sayyid Qutb RH (1906-1966)

Sayyid Qutb (Allah have mercy upon him) was a prominent and influential Muslim intellectual and writer. He wrote many books about Islam and its distinctive features as a comprehensive way of life. Among his most important works is his exegesis of the Qur'an 'In the Shade of the Qur'an', which was widely welcomed among Muslims and established itself as one of the best references in Qur'an exegesis.

Narrated by Ibn Mas'ood (Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

“Soon others will be given preference upon you, and there will be things which you will not like.”

The companions RA of the Prophet (ﷺ) asked,

“O Allah's Messenger! (ﷺ) What do you order us to do (in this case)?”

He said, **“(I order you) to give the rights that are on you and to ask your rights from Allah.”**

(Bukhari)

Abdullah ibn Hudhafah as-Sahmi (Allah be pleased with him)

History would have bypassed this man as it had bypassed thousands of Arabs before him. He, like them, would have had no claim to attention or fame. The greatness of Islam, however, gave to Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him) the opportunity to meet two world monarchs of his time - Khusraw Parvez the King of Persia and Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor.

The story of his encounter with Khusraw Parvez began in the sixth year of the Hijrah when the Prophet (ﷺ) decided to send some of his Companions (Allah be pleased with them) with letters to rulers outside the Arabian Peninsula inviting them to Islam.

The Prophet (ﷺ) attached great importance to this initiative. These messengers were going to distant lands with whom there was no agreement nor treaty. They did not know the languages of these lands nor anything about the ways and disposition of their rulers. They were to invite these rulers to give up their religion and forsake their power and enter the religion of a people, who shortly before were almost their subservients. The mission was undoubtedly hazardous.

To make known his plan, the Prophet (ﷺ) called his Companions (Allah be pleased with them) together and addressed them. He started by praising Allah and thanking Him. He then recited the Shahadah and went on,

"I want to send some of you to the rulers of foreign lands but don't dispute with me as the Israelites disputed with Jesus (ﷺ), the son of Mary (Allah be pleased with her)."

"O Prophet of Allah, we shall carry out whatever you wish," they responded. **"Send us wherever you desire."**

The Prophet ﷺ commissioned six of his Sahabah (Allah be pleased with them) to carry his letters to Arab and foreign rulers; one of these was Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him). He was chosen to take the Prophet's ﷺ letter to Khusraw Parvez, the Persian king. Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) got his camel ready and bade farewell to his wife and son. He set out, alone, and traversed mountains and valleys until he reached the land of the Persians.

He sought permission to enter into the king's presence informing the guards of the letter he was carrying. Khusraw Parvez thereupon ordered his audience chamber to be made ready and summoned his prominent aides. When they had assembled he permitted Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) to enter.

Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) entered and saw the Persian monarch dressed in delicate, flowing robes and wearing a great, neatly arranged turban. On Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) was the plain, coarse clothes of the Bedouin. His head though was held high and his feet were firm. The honour of Islam burned fiercely in his breast and the power of faith pulsated in his heart.

As soon as Khusraw Parvez saw him approaching he signalled to one of his men to take the letter from his hand.

"No," said Abdullah. "The Prophet ﷺ commanded me to hand over this letter to you directly and I shall not go against a command of the Messenger of Allah."

"Let him come near to me," Khusraw said to his guards and Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) went forward and handed over the letter. Khusraw then called an Arab clerk who originally came from Hira and ordered him to open the letter in his presence and read its contents. He began reading,

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful. From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Khusraw the ruler of Persia. Peace on whoever follows the guidance . . ."

Khusraw only heard this much of the letter when the fire of anger burst within him. His face became red and he began to perspire around the neck. He snatched the letter from the clerk's hand and began tearing it to pieces without knowing what else it contained and shouted, "Does he dare to write to me like this, he who is my slave." He was angry that the Prophet ﷺ had not given him precedence in his letter. He then commanded Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) to be expelled from his assembly.

Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) was taken away, not knowing what would happen to him. Would he be killed or would he be set free? But he did not want to wait to find out. He said, "By Allah, I don't care what happens to me after the letter of the Prophet ﷺ has been so badly treated." He managed to get to his camel and rode off.

When Khusraw's anger had subsided he commanded that Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) be brought before him. But Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) was nowhere to be found. They searched for him all the way to the Arabian Peninsula but found that he had gone ahead.

Back in Madinah, Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) told the Prophet ﷺ how Khusraw had torn his letter to pieces and the Prophet's ﷺ only reply was, **"May Allah tear up his kingdom."**

Meanwhile, Khusraw wrote to Badhan, his deputy in Yemen, to send two strong men to "that man who has appeared in the Hijaz" with orders to bring him to Persia.

Badhan dispatched two of his strongest men to the Prophet ﷺ and gave them a letter; he also asked the two men to get whatever

information they could on the Prophet ﷺ and to study his message closely. The men set out, moving very quickly. At Taif, they met some Quraysh traders and asked them about Muhammad ﷺ. "He is in Yathrib," they said and they went on to Makkah feeling extremely happy. This was good news for them and they went around telling other Quraysh, "You will be pleased. Khusraw is out to get Muhammad and you will be rid of his evil."

The two men meanwhile made straight for Madinah where they met the Prophet ﷺ, handed him the letter of Badhan and said to him, **"The king of kings, Khusraw, has written to our ruler Badhan to send his men to get you. We have come to take you with us. If you come willingly, Khusraw has said that it will be good for you and he will spare you any punishment. If you refuse, you will know the power of his punishment. He has the power to destroy you and your people."**

The Prophet ﷺ smiled and said to them, **"Go back to your mounts today and return tomorrow."**

On the following day, they came to the Prophet ﷺ and said to him, **"Are you prepared to go with us to meet Khusraw?"**

"You shall not meet Khusraw after today," replied the Prophet ﷺ. **"Allah has killed him and his son Shirwaih has taken his place on such a night and such a month."**

The two men stared in the face of the Prophet ﷺ. They were completely dumbfounded.

"Do you know what you are saying?" they asked. **"Shall we write about this to Badhan?"**

"Yes," replied the Prophet ﷺ, **"And say to him that my religion has informed me about what has happened to the Kingdom of Khusraw**

and that if he should become Muslim, I would appoint him ruler over what he now controls."

The two men returned to Yemen and told Badhan what had happened. Badhan said, **"If what Muhammad ﷺ has said is true, then he is a Prophet. If not, then we shall see what happens to him."**

Not long afterwards a letter from Shirwaih came to Badhan in which he said, **"I killed Khusraw because of his tyranny against our people. He regarded as lawful the killing of leaders, the capturing of their women and the confiscating of their wealth. When this, my letter, reaches you, take the allegiance of whoever is with you on my behalf."**

As soon as Badhan had read Shirwaih's letter, he threw it aside and announced his entry into Islam. The Persians with him in Yemen also became Muslim.

That's the story of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah's (Allah be pleased with him) meeting with the Persian king. His meeting with the Byzantine emperor took place during the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him). It is also an astonishing story to recall.

In the nineteenth year after the Hijrah, Umar (Allah be pleased with him) dispatched an army to fight against the Byzantine. In it was Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him). News of the Muslim force reached the Byzantine emperor. He had heard of their sincerity of faith, and their willingness to sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ. He gave orders to his men to bring to him any Muslim captive they might take alive.

Allah willed that Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him) should fall captive to the Byzantines and he was brought before the emperor. The emperor looked at Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) for a long time. Suddenly he said, "I shall make a proposal to you."

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"What is it?" asked Abdullah.

"I suggest that you become a Christian. If you do this, you will be set free and I shall grant you a safe refuge."

Abdullah's (Allah be pleased with him) reaction was furious, "Death is preferable to me a thousand times to what you ask me to do."

"I see that you are a bold man. However, if you respond positively to what I propose to you, I will give you a share in my authority and swear you in as my aide."

Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him), shackled in his chains, smiled and said, "By Allah, if you give me all that you possess and all that the Arabs have in exchange for giving up the religion of Muhammad ﷺ, I shall not do so."

"Then I shall kill you."

"Do what you want," answered Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him)

The emperor then had him put on a cross and ordered his soldiers to throw spears at him, first near his hands and then near his feet, all the while telling him to accept Christianity or at least give up his religion. This, he refused to do over and over again.

The emperor then had him taken down from the wooden cross. He called for a great pot to be brought which was filled with oil and then heated under a fierce fire. He then had two other Muslim prisoners brought and had one of them thrown into the boiling oil. The prisoner's flesh sizzled and soon his bones could be seen. The emperor turned to Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) and invited him to Christianity once again.

This was the most terrible test that Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) had to face up until now. But he remained firm and the emperor

gave up trying. He then ordered that Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) be thrown into the pot too. As he was being taken away he began to shed tears. The emperor thought that he had at last been broken and had him brought back to him. He suggested once more that Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) become a Christian but to his astonishment, Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) refused for the last time.

"Damn you! Why did you weep then?" shouted the emperor.

"I cried," said Abdullah, "because I said to myself, 'You will now be thrown into this pot and your soul will depart', What I desired then was to have as many souls as the number of hairs on my body and to have all of them thrown into this pot for the sake of Allah."

The tyrant then said, "Will you kiss my head? I will then set you free?"

"And all the Muslim prisoners also?" asked Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him).

This, the emperor agreed to do and Abdullah said to himself, "One of the enemies of Allah! I shall kiss his head and he shall set me and all other Muslim prisoners free. There can be no blame on me for doing this." He then went up to the emperor and kissed his forehead. All the Muslim prisoners were released and handed over to Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him).

Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him) eventually came to Umar ibn al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) and told him what had happened. Umar (Allah be pleased with him) was greatly pleased and when he looked at the prisoners he said, "Every Muslim has a duty to kiss the head of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah and I shall be the first."

Umar (Allah be pleased with him) then got up and kissed the head of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him).

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Moral

The story of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him) is one of my favourites, Alhumdu Lillah! It is a story brimming and bursting with bravery and Iman and courage. The nerve and fearlessness of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah is something we all need to aspire to gain. His Iman did not waiver, not even in front of the greatest superpowers of the time. This is a story of Tawakkul and Tawheed and believing in His decree. Such qualities are lacking and almost extinct in the Muslim Ummah; we need to give birth to such men again.

Heartfelt Dua: Allah grant us the spirit and bravado of Abdullah ibn Hudhafah (Allah be pleased with him), Allah elevate his status and grant us a place next to him in Jannah. Ameen.

Abdullah (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Whoever has a mustard seed's weight of pride (arrogance) in his heart, shall not be admitted into Paradise.

And whoever has a mustard seed's weight of faith in his heart, shall not be admitted into the Fire.”

(Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 27, Hadith 104)

Are You a Trustworthy Person?

Yes, maybe. I do not know, it depends. These are the usual answers to such questions.

But really, are you? Ask yourself, "would I trust myself?"

We tend to say that I do not trust him/her, I can't trust him/her but have you thought for a second that maybe that person sees you in that manner.

During the reign of 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) as Amir ul Mu'mineen he had a practice of testing his agents or candidates before appointing them in certain positions that involved taking care of the Ummah. It was said that he was very keen in doing this and that some would take a long time before he would actually give or appoint a role. This is exactly what happened with Al Ahnaf Ibn Qays (Allah be pleased with him).

Al Ahnaf (Allah be pleased with him) narrated, "I came to 'Umar Ibn Al Khattab and he kept me with him in Madinah for a year. He said, "O Ahnaf, I have been testing you and I have seen that you are outwardly good, and I hope that you are as inwardly (good) as you are outwardly. We used to say that this nation will be destroyed by knowledgeable hypocrites."

Then 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) asked me, "Do you know why I kept you here?" He then explained to me that he had wanted to test me, for he wanted to appoint me as governor.

And with this, 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) advised me the following,

"O Ahnaf, one who laughs too much loses dignity; one who jokes too much loses respect; whoever does something a great deal becomes known for it; one who speaks a great deal makes mistakes; one who makes many mistakes loses his sense of dignity. Whoever loses his sense of dignity loses his God-fearing (taqwa), and whoever loses his God-fearing (taqwa) is spiritually dead."

Al Ahnaf (Allah be pleased with him) later became the governor of Najaf in Iraq.

He was one of the best military commanders and was a great leader of the Banu Tamim tribe. He was so highly respected that his tribe wouldn't make a decision until they received his opinion on a matter. When our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ died, some Muslims turned back and left Islam but his tribe along with him were one of the families that stayed Muslims. He was called Al Ahnaf because of a defect on his foot.

Moral

Subhan'Allah! Such beautiful words of advice from 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) that we can all reflect upon. What is the connection of this story to my topic? It's simple - we need to be cautious with people we trust to the extent that we should observe and test these people because once we open our doors for them in our lives, they can either bring us closer to Allah or stray us away from Him. Indeed, from this story we can see that 'Umar (Allah be pleased with him) as an Amir ul Mu'mineen didn't just depend on mere recommendations, rather he would go on and do his own research. He was known to have appointed the best amongst the living Sahabah during his time as governor - and indeed this was showcased as it was during his reign

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that Islam spread out very vastly. Many historians have gone on to describe his era as the golden age of Islam.

What does this story tell us? Trust is incredibly important in Islam, especially if it is a matter that involves the Muslim Ummah by large. So when one is appointed in a leadership role, remember that your subjects are an amanah (trust) and to deal with them in all aspects fairly and honestly. Allah make us people who are God-fearing and trustworthy. Ameen

Reference: Al Wilayah All Buldan 1/142

Umar (Allah be pleased with him) asked about a man who had given testimony, wanting to find out whether anyone could vouch for him.

A man said to him: "I will vouch for him, O' Ameer al-Mumineen." Umar asked, "Are you his neighbour?"

He said, "No."

He then asked, "Did you mix with him for a day and come to know his character?"

He said, "No."

He asked next: "Did you travel with him, for travelling and being away from home reveal a man's true essence?"

He said, "No."

Umar RA said, "Perhaps you saw him in the mosque, standing, sitting and praying?"

He said, "Yes." Umar RA said, "Go away, for you do not know him."

Source: Umar ibn al-Khattab RA His life and times

that Islam spread out very vastly. Many historians have gone on to describe his era as the golden age of Islam.

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The Islam of Adiyy ibn Hatim (Allah be pleased with him)

Indeed, life in this world is very short, most people only reach around 60-70 years of age. So, think wisely of how you will use this short life Allah has blessed you with. I want you to take some time out and reflect, then ask yourself, "How have I been towards my elders and my old aged relatives?" Do you visit them or even call them? We have to realise that these people used to take care of us and now it is a respectful gesture to take care of them - they need and yearn for affection and care, just how they gave it to us. With that in mind, I will be sharing one instance in the life of Adiyy ibn Hatim (Allah be pleased with him) that became one of the main reasons of him embracing Islam.

Adiyy (Allah be pleased with him) was the son of Hatim Al Ta'i - the Arab exemplar of honour and generosity during the days of Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic era). Adiyy (Allah be pleased with him) was a Christian before entering Islam and he was not any ordinary one - he was a very religious man as well as the leader of his tribe (after his father passed away).

When Islam came, it was said that he fled to Anatolia where Christianity was widespread but later on came back to Madinah through the influence of his sister - Safanah Bint Hatim (Allah be pleased with her). Due to this, Adiyy (Allah be pleased with him) travelled back to Madinah carrying the thought of meeting a king in the person of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

As Adiyy (Allah be pleased with him) narrated, "I came to Muhammad ﷺ whilst he was in the mosque and saluted him." He asked, "Who is

this man?" I then introduced myself so he ﷺ invited me to his home. While we were on our way to his house, he was stopped for a long time by a weak, old woman who was telling him about something she needed. So, I thought to myself, "By Allah! This man is no king." Adiyy (Allah be pleased with him) realised through that short instance that such character could only belong to a Prophet of Allah - and that was one thing that spoke to him and he accepted Islam.

Moral

Ma Sha Allah, when you read stories like this, you realise that indeed character can speak volumes and it really is true without even talking to people, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was able to influence people to accept Islam. Our beloved Messenger of Allah's ﷺ character towards the old woman was full of humility and respect - in a position of such high authority and with multiple duties to fulfil, he ﷺ ensured this elderly woman was heard and not dismissed, despite her slow and lengthy communication. Sadly, our reality can be quite the contrary, and when we realise that an old person is either repeating themselves or incomprehensible in their speech, we immediately start to find ways to end the conversation or take our leave. My brothers and sisters in Islam, this story may be short but I ask you to reflect from it very well and recheck how you are behaving towards your elders.

May Allah kindle and put in our hearts the love for the old and weak. May He enable us to have the ability and capabilities of helping and taking care of them as we would want to be taken care of when we reach such age. Ameen.

Reference:

- As Sirat An Nabawiyyah by Ibn Hisham 4/224-228
- As Sirat An Nabawiyyah by As Salabi 2/559-578

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Make a change.

Do the change.

Be the change.

Nusaybah bint Ka'ab

(Allah be pleased with her)

The First Woman Warrior of Islam

Before we talk about our heroine, Nusaybah bint Ka'ab al Maziniyyah or Umm Imarah (Allah be pleased with her), it is very important to understand the status of women prior and post Islam. Without this, it would be difficult to realise the huge transformation that women saw upon the outset of Islam.

For women, Islam has been a special blessing. In Arabia, before the advent of Islam, the birth of a female child was regarded as a great misfortune and shame, and cruel fathers buried them alive - **"When news is brought to one of them of the birth of a female child, his face darkens, and he is filled with inner grief. With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he had. Shall he retain it on sufferance and contempt, or bury it in the dust? Ah! What an evil choice they decide on"** (16:58-59). Prior to Islam, a woman was regarded by her parents as a threat to the family honour and would, therefore, be buried alive. As an adult, she was a sex object that could be bought, sold and inherited. From this position of inferiority and legal incapacity, Islam raised women to a position of influence and prestige in family and society.

Islam elevated the position of women in society and treated her on an equal footing with men, and in some cases, as a mother for instance, clearly gave her precedence over the man. **Thus, when a man asked the Prophet ﷺ, "Who amongst the people is most deserving of my fine treatment?" The Prophet ﷺ told him, "Your mother." The man asked, "Who is next?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Your mother." Again, the**

man asked, "Who is next?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Your mother." The man asked for a fourth time, "Who is next?" The Prophet ﷺ then said "Your father." On another occasion when a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and expressed the desire to join a military expedition, the Prophet ﷺ asked him if he had a mother. When he replied that he had, the Prophet ﷺ told him, "Stay with her, for Paradise is at her feet."

Islam gave women an independent identity and declared that her moral and spiritual gains depend solely on her own performance. Like men, her ultimate failure or success rests on her own beliefs, attitude, behaviour and conduct. She is a responsible being in her own right and carries the burden of her moral and spiritual obligations. The Muslim women are equal partners with men in all spheres of life.

Nusaybah Bint Ka'ab (Allah be pleased with her), was one of those who embraced Islam with unbelievable strength. History does not tell us much about her years prior to Islam. A member of the Banu Najjar tribe living in Madinah, Nusaybah was the sister of Abdullah bin Ka'ab, and the mother of Abdullah and Habib ibn Zayd al-Ansari (Allah be pleased with them).

When 74 people descended on the Second Pledge at al-Aqabah to swear allegiance to Islam following the teaching of Musab bin Umayr (Allah be pleased with him), Nusaybah and Umm Muneer Asma bint Amr (Allah be pleased with them) were the only two women. The latter's husband, Ghazyah bin 'Amr (Allah be pleased with him), informed the Prophet ﷺ that the women also wanted to swear their allegiance, and he agreed, noting that he would not take their hands in his as he had done with the men. Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her) returned to Madinah and began teaching Islam to the women of the city.

Her two sons, both later killed in battle, were from her first marriage to Zaid bin 'Asim Mazini (Allah be pleased with him). She later married

Ghazyah bin 'Amr (Allah be pleased with him), and had another son Tameem and a daughter Khawlah (Allah be pleased with them).

With the advent of Islam, she believed that a woman has the same duty in defending the new religion. In fact, many consider her as the most distinguished woman who took part in the battle of Uhud.

At the beginning of the battle, she was bringing water to the thirsty fighters and tending the wounded, as the other women were doing. When the battle was going in favour of the Muslims, the archers disobeyed the command of the Prophet ﷺ and this made the Muslims lose the upper hand, as the Qur'an described it.

At this point, Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her) went forward, with her sword unsheathed and her bow in her hand, to join the small group who were standing firm with the Prophet ﷺ, acting as a human shield to protect him from the arrows of the non-believers. Every time danger approached the Prophet ﷺ she hastened to protect him. Muhammad ﷺ noticed this, and later said, ***"Wherever I turned, to the left or the right, I saw her fighting for me."***

Her son 'Imarah (Allah be pleased with him) also described what happened on that tremendous day. ***"On that day, I was wounded in my left hand. A man, who seemed to be as tall as a palm-tree struck me, then went away without pursuing me. The blood began to flow copiously, so the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told me, 'Bind up your wound.' My mother came to me, and she was wearing a waist-wrapper, which she had brought for the purpose of bandaging wounds. She dressed my wound, whilst the Prophet ﷺ was looking on. Then she instructed me, 'Get up, my son, and fight.' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Who could bear what you are putting up with, Umm 'Imarah?' The man who had struck me came by, and the Prophet ﷺ said, 'This is the one who struck your son.' Umm Imarah intercepted him and hit him in the thigh, and he collapsed. I saw the Messenger***

of Allah ﷺ smiling so broadly that I could see his back teeth. He ﷺ said, 'You have taken your revenge, O Umm 'Imarah!' Then we struck him with our weapons until we killed him, and the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Praise be to Allah, who granted you victory over him, gave you the satisfaction of taking revenge on your enemy, and let you see the vengeance for yourself.'

On that day, Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her) herself received many wounds whilst she was fighting the non-believers and striking at them. The Prophet ﷺ saw her, and called to her son, "Your mother! Your mother! See to her wounds, may Allah bless you and your family! Your mother has fought better than so-and-so." When Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her) heard what the Prophet ﷺ said, she said, "Pray to Allah that we may accompany you in Paradise." He ﷺ responded, "O Allah (SWT), make them my companions in Paradise." She said, "I do not care what befalls me in this world."

Umm 'Imarah's jihad was not confined to the battle of Uhud. She was also present on a number of other occasions, namely the Treaty of 'Aqabah, Al-Hudaybiyah, Khaybar and Hunayn. Her heroic conduct at Hunayn was no less marvellous than her heroic conduct at Uhud. At the time of Abu Bakr's Khilafah, she was present at Al-Yamamah where she fought valiantly and received eleven wounds as well as losing her hand.

Nusaybah lived through the rule of Abu Bakr Al Siddique (Allah be pleased with him) and Umar ibn Al Khattab (Allah be pleased with him). She was revered by both who continuously praised her struggle and courage. It is said that once Umar (Allah be pleased with him) received a gift from some foreign place. It consisted mainly of a piece of cloth made from the finest silk. Some people who were present suggested that he send it either to his daughter or his daughter in law. Umar (Allah be pleased with him) rejected both suggestions. He said

that there is a woman who deserves that cloth more than all, and he sent it to Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her).

Again, her end is shrouded with ambiguity. All we know is that this great woman died in the 13 Hijri year, and was buried in Al Baqee in al-Madinatul Munawwarah.

Moral

Here we have another story brimming with bravery and boldness, however, it is refreshing to see that these envious qualities emanated from a female companion. Not long after decades of ignorance and brutality against females, we see the justice and empowerment that Islam honoured women with. Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her) was a shining embodiment of this in a time where women were oppressed and perceived as mere play items. At the Battle of Uhud, Nusaybah's (Allah be pleased with her) gallantry came out in full force stamping out all derogatory stereotypes of women.

The beauty of this story, as with many others is the timelessness and the relatability which helps women from every era to feel a sense of strength and encouragement. This was a time when Jihad was prevalent, but it was still uncommon for women to have any sort of role involving weaponry. However, Nusaybah (Allah be pleased with her) did not waiver and showed tremendous level of forbearance. Allah inspire women to follow such pioneering luminaries. Ameen.

**“Learn patience from Asiyah RA,
Loyalty from Khadeejah RA,
Purity from Maryam RA,
Sincerity from A'ishah RA
And steadfastness from Fatimah RA.
If a beautiful woman is a jewel,
A pious woman is a treasure.”**

*Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have
mercy upon him)*

The Prophet ﷺ has said, *"To utter the truth in the face of a tyrant is
the best Jihad."* (Ibn Majah)

Hajjaj ibn Yusuf the notorious blood-shedder was in power at the time of Saeed ibn Jubayr who was a Tabiee (Allah have mercy upon him). Hajjaj's harshness and tyranny are well known in human history. He was the viceroy of King Abdul Malik bin Marwan for Hijaz and Iraq. The king lived in Damascus and Hajjaj had his headquarters at Kufah. Saeed bin Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him) had fought against Hajjaj on the side of Ibnul Ash'ath (Allah have mercy upon him). After the defeat, Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him) ran away and took asylum in Makkah. The Government posted a very stern person as the Governor of Makkah, with instructions to arrest Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him). The Governor assembled all the people of Makkah and read before them the order of King Abdul Malik (Allah have mercy upon him), which said, "Any person who gives shelter to Saeed ibn Jubayr shall meet the same fate as Saeed himself."

He then announced to the people,
"By Allah! I must kill the person who gives shelter to Saeed ibn Jubayr. His and his neighbours' houses shall be razed to the ground."

Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him) was known for his scrupulous piety and a vast amount of knowledge; he was arrested with great difficulty and sent to Kufah. Some say Hajjaj was looking for

him for eight years. And when he was arrested in Makkah he was with his family and upon seeing this, his daughter came running after him crying – Saeed was trying to stay strong. He told his daughter, "O my beloved daughter! Tell your mother we will meet in Jannah!" He knew he was going to die. When he was brought before Hajjaj, the following conversation took place.

Hajjaj: What is your name?

Saeed: My name is Saeed (lit. Auspicious).

Hajjaj: What is your father's name?

Saeed: Jubayr (lit. Trimmed).

Hajjaj: No, you are in fact Shaqi (lit. Wretched) son of Kusayr (lit. a broken thing).

Saeed: My mother knew my name better than you do.

Hajjaj: You are wretched and so is your mother.

Saeed: The Knower of hidden things is someone else, not you.

Hajjaj: Look! I am putting you to the sword.

Saeed: Then my mother was right in giving me this name.

Hajjaj: I shall send you to Hell.

Saeed: If I knew that you had that power, I would have taken you as my god.

Hajjaj: What is your belief about the Prophet ﷺ?

Saeed: He was an Apostle of Mercy and a Prophet of Allah ﷻ, sent with the best guidance for the whole creation.

Hajjaj: What do you say about the Caliphs?

Saeed: I am not a wanderer over them. Everybody is responsible for their actions.

Hajjaj: Who is the most exalted of the four Caliphs?

Saeed: The one who had been able to please Allah more than the rest?

Hajjaj: Which of them had been able to please Allah?

Saeed: This is known only to Him, Who knows what is hidden in the bosoms and what the hearts conceal.

Hajjaj: Is Ali (Allah be pleased with him) in Paradise or Hell?

Saeed: I can answer only after I visit the two places and meet their dwellers.

Hajjaj: How shall I fare on the Day of Judgement?

Saeed: I am not fit to receive the knowledge of the unseen.

Hajjaj: You do not intend to tell me the truth.

Saeed: But I did not tell a lie either.

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Hajjaj: Why do you never laugh?

Saeed: I do not see anything to laugh at; and indeed why should one laugh, who is created from dust, who has to appear on the Day of Judgement, and is always surrounded by tribulations.

Hajjaj: But I do laugh.

Saeed: Allah has created us with different temperaments.

Hajjaj: I am now going to kill you.

Saeed: The time and manner of my death have already been decreed.

Hajjaj: Allah has preferred me to you.

Saeed: Nobody can be proud of his relation with Allah unless he knows his position, and Allah is the only knower of the unseen.

Hajjaj: Why should I not be proud of my relationship with Allah when I am with the Amirul Mumineen and you are with the rebels?

Saeed: I am with the other Muslims. I shun mischief, but nobody can change the decree of Allah.

Hajjaj: What do you say about what we collect for Amirul Mumineen?

Saeed: I do not know what you collect for him.

Hajjaj sent for gold, silver and dresses from the treasury and showed these to Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him).

Saeed: These are useful, provided you can obtain with them the things that may provide you peace on the Day of Consternation (i.e. Day of Judgement) when every nursing mother will forget her nursing, and every pregnant one will be delivered of her burden, and when nothing but good will be of any avail.

Hajjaj: Are our collections not good?

Saeed: You have collected them, and you are the best judge.

Hajjaj: Do you like any of these things for yourself?

Saeed: I only like the things which Allah likes.

Hajjaj: Woe to you!

Saeed: Woe is for the person who is deprived of Paradise and is made to enter Hell.

Hajjaj: (Annoyed) Say, how should I kill you?

Saeed: As you would like to be killed.

Hajjaj: Should I forgive you?

Saeed: Allah's forgiveness is real. Your forgiveness is of no value.

Hajjaj: (To the executioner) Kill this man!

Saeed laughed while he was being taken for execution. Hajjaj was informed of this and called him back.

Hajjaj: What made you laugh?

Saeed: Your boldness with Allah, and His clemency to you.

Hajjaj: I am killing a person who has caused dissent among the Muslims. (To the executioner) Kill him in front of me.

Saeed: Let me pray my Salah of two rakaat.

After finishing Salah, he faced the Qiblah and recited,
"Verily, I have turned my face towards Him, Who created the heavens and earth, as one by nature upright, and I am not of the idolaters."

Hajjaj: Turn him from our Qiblah and let him face the Qiblah of the Christians, who also caused dissension and dispute among their community.

His face was immediately turned to the other direction.

Saeed: *"Whithersoever You turn, there is Allah's Face. For Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing."* (Quran 2:115)

Hajjaj: Make him lie on his face!

Saeed (Allah have mercy upon him) was made to lie on his face.

Saeed: *"From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again."* (Quran 20:55)

Hajjaj: Kill him!!

Saeed: I call you to witness what I recite, "I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, who is all alone and who has

no partner and I bear witness that Muhammad ﷺ is His slave and His Messenger.

Then Saeed (Allah have mercy upon him) supplicated, O Allah, do not allow him the power to kill anyone after me.

He was then beheaded - Inna lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Rajioon - *To Allah, we belong and to Him we return.* He was brutally slaughtered on a leather sheet.

After the execution, too much blood came out from Saeed's (Allah have mercy upon him) body. Hajjaj himself marvelled greatly at it and inquired the reason from his doctors, who said, "His tranquillity and composure at the time of death had kept his blood in its original form. Generally, people to be executed are terrified of death that their blood curdles and does not flow profusely." This also explains the report that when his head was chopped, it fell with the cap still on, and thrice it was heard from his lips "La ilaha illa Allah." The first time it was clear, but the second and third time weakly. It appears that it was his courage in the face of death that was daunting for Hajjaj. He felt belittled, was mad with anger, and so hurried to get him executed.

Several historians have mentioned the story of Saeed ibn Jubayr's (Allah have mercy upon him) conversation with Hajjaj before he was ordered executed. Parts of the conversation have been doubted for their authenticity, but in sum and substance, the story appears reliable.

Hajjaj himself seemed to have been severely affected by the sight of Saeed's (Allah have mercy upon him) murder. Immediately after the execution, Hajjaj began saying, "Our shackles, our shackles." His court-executioners thought he was referring to Saeed's (Allah have mercy upon him) shackles and promptly chopped off Saeed's feet from above his ankles to remove the shackles. This took place in the year 95 AH.

Ya'la, who was a very young secretary to Hajjaj, who entered upon Hajjaj whenever he willed. One day after Hajjaj had killed Saeed (Allah have mercy upon him) he entered upon him through one of the four doors of a canopy in which Hajjaj was resting. "As I entered," says he, "I heard him muttering, 'what's with me and Saeed ibn Jubayr.' I came out quietly in fear that if Hajjaj knew I had heard him, he would have ordered me killed." In any case, he did not last much after he got Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him) executed. He died fifteen days later, not having killed anyone after him, except a single man. When he fell sick just before death, he ordered a physician to be brought. Who took a piece of meat, tied it to a string, and inserted it into his stomach. He pulled it out after an hour and found blood clinging to it. He knew that Hajjaj would not survive. It is said that the rest of his life Hajjaj used to repeatedly say, "What's with me and Saeed ibn Jubayr? Whenever I want to sleep, Saeed pulls me by my clothes and says, 'O Allah's enemy. For what reason did you kill me?' and I wake up."

Someone saw Hajjaj in his dream after his death, and asked him how was he treated? He replied, "For every kill, I was killed once, but for killing Saeed ibn Jubayr I was killed seventy times." Ulama say this is because Saeed (Allah have mercy upon him) was an encyclopedia of knowledge.

It was in Wasit, a town in Iraq that Hajjaj had built at the shore of Dijlah (Tigris) where Saeed (Allah have mercy upon him) was executed and buried just outside the town. According to later historians, people used to visit his grave. 'Amr ibn Maymun (Allah have mercy upon him) said that at the time Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him) was martyred, there was no one on the earth who did not need his knowledge.

When Hasan al-Basri (Allah have mercy upon him) was informed of his death, he cursed Hajjaj and remarked, "By Allah, if the entire earth's population had participated in Saeed's murder, Allah would have hurled all of them into the Fire."

Imam ibn Sirin (Allah have mercy upon him) was a contemporary to Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (died 95 AH), and many of the princes and caliphs of Bani Umayyay. Imam ibn Sirin (Allah have mercy upon him) refused to insult Hajjaj after his death and said that human sins are only judged by the Creator.

It was narrated that Hajjaj ibn Yusuf saw in his sleep a vision as if two fairies had come to him, and he took one of them in and ignored the other. So he wrote to Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan about it and Abdul-Malik wrote to him, "Congratulations Abu Muhammad for the good tidings."

However, when the news reached Imam Ibn Sirin (Allah have mercy upon him) he said: "He is wrong, these are two signs of strife. He will witness one and miss the other," and indeed, he did.

Khasseef used to say, "The most knowledgeable among the followers in matters of divorce was Saeed ibn al-Musayyib, in matters involving Hajj it was 'Ata, in matters involving lawful and unlawful it was Ta'us, in matters involving Tafsir it was Abu al-Hajjaj and Mujahid ibn Jubayr and he who combined in himself the knowledge of all these disciplines was Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him).

People saw him either bent down over a book or standing straight up like a pillar before his Lord. So, alternatively he was in his life either a student or a devotee; although he well realised that the true devotion of a believer's life was to live in obedience to Allah's commands. He used to say, "True fear of your Lord is that it should come in between you and His disobedience. This is true devotion. He who obeyed Allah,

is the true devotee. As for him who did not obey Him, he is not a devotee even if he engaged himself much in Dhikr and recitation of the Qur'an."

How deep his understanding of a man's true relationship with his Lord, comes out from his following statement: "Once I met a monk (presumably a Christian). He told me, 'O Saeed. It is tribulations that bring to distinguishing light, him who is a true devotee of God, and him who is in truth a devotee of the Devil."

Moral

The mettle, the grit and perseverance of Saeed ibn Jubayr (Allah have mercy upon him) was remarkable and he proved to be a true soldier of Allah SWT, not bowing down to the tyrants of the time. This is the role of the Ulama in this day and age first and foremost, then the general public. Allah raises the status of such people in this world and the hereafter which we can only dream of.

**“In life learn to be a warrior
not a worrier.”**

Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him)

Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) was born in Bukhara (present day Russia). Imam Bukhari's (Allah have mercy upon him) grandfather Mughira was the first in his family to have converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism. Imam Bukhari's (Allah have mercy upon him) father died when Imam Bukhari was still an infant. After the father's death, Imam Bukhari's mother brought him to Makkah from Bukhara. Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him), although physically weak, was endowed by Allah with great intelligence and a sharp, retentive memory; he was very fond of acquiring knowledge and being a very devout and religious person, he began to study the Hadith at the early age of eleven. He had very soon gathered all the traditions available in Hijaz (Saudi Arabia), and undertook journeys for the collection of Hadith. He continued to travel for about forty years throughout the Muslim world in the pursuit of knowledge and went to the most narrators of Hadith to gather the traditions from them.

After having gathered a large number of Hadith, he returned to Nishapur. By this time, his fame as a traditionalist had spread far and wide. He was, therefore, given a grand reception by the local residents. Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) began teaching the traditions to the people. He wanted to settle down there, but he could not do so as he had incurred the displeasure of the governor, who wanted Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) to come to his palace to give lessons to his sons. Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) refused to do so, for he considered this a degradation of Hadith. Then the governor suggested that his children could go to him, but only if there were no other students present at that time. But

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Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) did not accept even this condition. This enraged the governor, so he gave orders for his extradition from the city.

Then, Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) went to Khartank, a village at Samarqand. There he settled down and died in the year 256 A.H./870 C.E. Throughout his life Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) was strictly pious, honest and generous to the poor and to students. He did not bear any ill-will towards anybody, not even his enemies. His entire life and all of his wealth were devoted to the collection of Hadith and the greater part of his life was spent in travelling for this purpose. Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) began writing very early; he had compiled his first book at the age of 18 when he was in Madinah. Afterwards, he wrote several books, the most famous and important of all of his books is Saheeh Bukhari. It is considered by almost all the traditionalists to be the most authentic book in Hadith literature. The author himself read it out to 90,000 students. It made his name immortal because of many positive features, and Saheeh Bukhari has been rightly considered to be an authority to only the Qur'an. Many commentaries have appeared in which every aspect of the book has been thoroughly discussed.

In Al-Fawa'id Ad-Dararee, Imam Ajilooni (Allah have mercy on him) related that Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy on him) once travelled by boat on a journey to seek out knowledge and that he had taken with him one thousand dinar. One of his fellow travellers ingratiated himself with Imam Bukhari, outwardly showing him love and admiration. During the sea-voyage, the man often made it a point to sit in his company. On long journeys friendships develop faster than normal; during the time they spent together, Imam Bukhari informed the man that he had one thousand dinar with him. The next morning, the man woke up and began to cry, scream, rip his clothing apart and slap his face, as if he had just been afflicted with a great loss. His fellow

shipmates asked him what was wrong but he refused to answer at first as if he was still in a state of shock and could not bring himself to speak about his situation. After they continually insisted that he tell them what the matter was with him, he finally said, "I had a bag that contained one thousand dinars, and I have lost it."

The crewmen who were in charge of the ship began to search the passengers. One by one everyone was being searched, and upon realising what was happening, Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) making sure that no one was looking, threw his bag of money over the side of the ship. When it was his turn to be searched, nothing was found. When the entire ship and all of its passengers were searched, and when no bag of money was found, those in authority on the ship went back to the man who had made up the story and chastised him for making a false claim and for putting them through so much trouble. As soon as the ship finally reached shore, the passengers began to disembark; meanwhile, Imam Bukhari's (Allah have mercy upon him) old friend went to him and asked him what he had done with the bag of money.

"I threw it into the sea," Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) matter-of-factly replied.

"And you are patiently accepting the fact that you have just lost such a huge sum of money?" the man asked in bewilderment.

"O ignorant one!" Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) said, "do you not know that I have spent my entire life gathering the Ahadeeth of the Messenger ﷺ and that the world now acknowledges my trustworthiness. Would it then have been befitting for me to subject myself to the accusation of theft? And shall I lose the precious pearl (i.e. my knowledge and achievements as a scholar) that I have earned over a lifetime over a limited number of dinars?"

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Moral

This story teaches us the value of honour and how the Imams of the past would act so that their honour would never be compromised, even when they had done no wrong. This was for many reasons, one of the main ones being that if their character came under scrutiny the work that they had done could also come under scrutiny, and as we know Imam Bukhari's (Allah have mercy upon him) work was one of the most important in the history of Islam. We hope and make dua that Allah inculcates the qualities of Imam Bukhari (Allah have mercy upon him) in future generations of scholars, specifically, sincerity, valuing honour and safeguarding one's integrity.

“Whosoever has Allah in his heart, his helper in both worlds is Allah.

And whoever has other than Allah in his heart, his opponent in both worlds is Allah.”

An inscription at the mausoleum of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi RH, Konya, Turkey.

Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him)

The potential of Zakah as a source of poverty eradication is optimistic and positive. However, the gulf between theory and reality can often be significant. In South-East Asia, this gulf unfortunately exists. Zakah implementation has had limited success and suffers from significant inefficiency. The woes of modern-day Zakah are in stark contrast to the success of Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him), who is oft-mentioned as the shining example of Zakah success. Historical accounts show that there was a surplus of Zakah funds during his reign i.e. there was so little poverty, that Zakah eligible recipients were scant (As-Sallabi, 1999, p574).

We will discuss the success of Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him) in implementing Zakah and using it to substantially reduce poverty. A brief introductory note will be given about Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him), followed by a discussion of three factors which contributed towards his success; the trustworthiness of Umar as an encouragement to pay Zakah, local distribution of funds, and using funds to develop productive capacities.

A brief definition is as follows; Zakah is mandatory charity, to be taken from those who hold more than a minimum threshold of assets over a lunar year, and to be given to the poor and needy.

Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him) succeeded Sulayman bin Abdul-Malik (Allah have mercy upon him) as the caliph of the Muslims in the 99th year of the Islamic calendar until he died in 101 AH (As-Sallabi, 1999, p102-109). His rule was remarkable, with many referring to him as one of the rightly guided caliphs (As-Sallabi, 1999, p49), a group bearing the gold standard of early Muslim leaders,

including Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib (Allah be pleased with them all). During his rule, he navigated through theological and political controversies, including the Kharijite uprising (As-Sallabi, 1999, p281-197).

Indeed, his talents stretched beyond the spheres of leadership and politics; Umar was a mujtahid (an issuer of Islamic legal rulings), and a hafidh (one who has memorised the entire Qur'an, verbatim). As-Sallabi's biography of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) is gushing with praise over this piety, character and conduct.

The most significant praise given to Umar (Allah have mercy upon him), is that he is regarded as the first Mujaddid (Reviver) of Islam; that is to say, scholars regard him as the first of those to fulfil the following hadith: **'Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for it'** (Sunan Abu Dawud).

Shaykh As-Sallabi (2010, p204) states that this is at least partly a result of exerting his capacity as caliph to rejuvenate the Muslim community. Given the magnanimous praise heaped upon Umar (Allah have mercy upon him), perhaps it is no surprise that his implementation of Zakah is seen as a model in Islamic history.

The success of Umar bin Abdul-Aziz

Historical accounts show that there was a surplus of Zakah funds during his reign i.e. there was so little poverty, that Zakah eligible recipients could not be found (As-Sallabi, 1999, p574). To add nuance to this account, total poverty eradication might not have happened; in the absence of fast communication and travel, it would have been likely that there were some people who were poor enough to receive Zakah but were not found. At any rate, significant poverty reduction was achieved. Several factors can be attributed to this successful

...*ma'rifatun*. They are Umar's (Allah have mercy upon him) commitment to justice and fairness as encouragement for people to pay Zakah, the emphasis upon local distribution of funds and using Zakah funds for building productive capabilities.

First is the remarkable commitment to justice and fairness of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him). He was first made caliph by the previous caliph, Sulayman bin Abdul-Malik (Allah have mercy upon him). His first act as caliph was to impeach himself. Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) insisted that he would only be caliph if the people voted for him, which they did (As-Sallabi, 1999, p106). It is argued that the unwavering commitment to justice and renowned piety of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) caused a strong relationship of trust between himself and Zakah payers (As-Sallabi, 1999). This was in stark contrast to previous leaders who had misused Zakah funds. As a result of that trust, they very willingly gave Zakah to officials who Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) deemed as trustworthy. This would be crucial in reducing poverty. Contemporary studies show that if everyone were to pay their Zakah in particular Muslim countries, absolute poverty would be significantly reduced, or even eradicated (Islamic Social Finance Report, 2014). However, actual mobilisation of Zakah funds is particularly low. In this respect, Umar's (Allah have mercy upon him) commitment to fairness was a factor which reduced the gap between actual and potential Zakah funds. From this we can garner that trustworthiness of a Zakah institute is crucial to encourage people to pay Zakah.

The second factor contributing to Umar's (Allah have mercy upon him) success is his emphasis on the local distribution of Zakah funds. Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) instructed Zakah officials to distribute the funds in the areas in which they were collected unless there was a greater need elsewhere.

...Allah have mercy upon him) created scope for individuals to move beyond subsistence, into more productive economic activity, thereby reducing poverty.

Secondly, the trustworthiness of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) and local distribution of funds, and emphasis upon agriculture and productive capacity were significant success factors in determining the success of his Zakah implementation.

Umar

Umar bin Abdul Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him), the caliph who is regarded as the first Mujaddid of Islam, is said to have eradicated absolute poverty during his two-and-a-half-year reign. This story has attributed three factors to this; Umar's justice and trustworthiness as a motivation for people to pay Zakah, the focus upon local distribution which increased the efficiency of distribution, and using funds for developing agriculture and productive capacity. This is not an exhaustive set of factors; other factors have been omitted due to a lack of scope, such as the legal implementation of Zakah.

The case of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) is an extremely optimistic and encouraging one; it shows the potency of Zakah. Perhaps then, the lack of similar success in today's age is disappointing. The community of Islamic Financiers and thinkers need to pay deeper regard towards this problem; the academic literature on Zakah today is thin, eclipsed by concerns with other, arguably less important elements of Islamic Finance. But this lack of attention is shocking, given the scale of what Zakah can achieve, as is aptly demonstrated by the case of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him).

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In summary, the trustworthiness of Umar (Allah have mercy upon him), local distribution of funds, and emphasis upon agriculture and productive capacity were significant success factors in determining the success of his Zakah implementation.

Moral

Umar bin Abdul Aziz (Allah have mercy upon him), the caliph who is regarded as the first Mujaddid of Islam, is said to have eradicated absolute poverty during his two-and-a-half-year reign. This story has attributed three factors to this; Umar's justice and trustworthiness as a motivation for people to pay Zakah, the focus upon local distribution which increased the efficiency of distribution, and using funds for developing agriculture and productive capacity. This is not an exhaustive set of factors; other factors have been omitted due to a lack of scope, such as the legal implementation of Zakah.

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The Muslim community at large should intensify its efforts towards addressing this situation. Education, policy and academia should be lenses through which these efforts are channelled. But before any of that, Zakah should never be forgotten as a pillar of Islam, and as the worship of Allah. Only when this is kept in mind will the Muslim community gain the fervour and zeal that is needed to implement Zakah as successfully as Umar (Allah have mercy upon him) did.

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Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'as (Allah be pleased with him) reported: Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"The just will be seated upon pulpits of light. Those who are fair with their judgement and their family and those who are under them."

(Muslim)

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him)

In the earlier part of the second century, an ideology called I'tizal crept into the Ummah. The people following this ideology were known as Mu'tazilah. This group were regarded as rationalists and philosophers. They would try and justify Islamic teachings and beliefs through ration and intellect. Their centre of focus was mainly issues like the attributes of Allah, seeing Allah in Jannah, predestination, free will, and the nature of the words of Allah.

They gave preference to the intellect, ration and philosophy over the divine revelation sent by Allah and over the words of his Prophet ﷺ.

This ideology gained popularity during the reign of Mamun Rashid, so much so that it turned into a state religion, and their views were imposed upon the people, and the masses were forced to accept them.

The issue of the nature of the words of Allah, the Quran, became a major tenet of this school of thought and it was considered criteria for determining one's adherence to the Mu'tazili school of thought. The Mu'tazilites held that the Qur'an (the words of Allah) is a creation of Allah, whilst the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah maintained that the words of Allah are an attribute (sifaat) of Allah and not a creation of Allah.

The Mu'tazilites would punish and torture those who wouldn't accept their views. Mamun Rashid once summoned all the big Ulama of the time to question them about their beliefs about the nature of the words of Allah. Some of those Ulama accepted the views of the Mu'tazilites, out of fear, whilst other Ulama stayed firm on the belief of the Ahlus Sunnah. Out of them, some such as Ishaq ibn Ibrahim (Allah have mercy upon him), Bishr ibn Walid (Allah have mercy upon

him) and Ibrahim al-Mahdi (Allah have mercy upon him) were executed, and many were thrown into prison.

After some time, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) was brought before the governor in Baghdad. He was tied with four chains fastening his legs and was told to submit to the view of the Mu'tazilites. He was told that the caliph had taken a vow that he would not execute him, but would have him severely tortured and confined in a dungeon, however, he still did not submit. He was then brought in front of the caliph who ordered that Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) should be given 34 lashes. After each whip, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) would say, "Give me some proof from the Qur'an or Sunnah, then I could accept your view."

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) was imprisoned and tortured for 28 months. People who felt for him, would visit him and narrated the Hadith to him that in such a situation one is allowed to even utter words of Kufr to save one's life. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) would reply, "But what do you say of the Hadith of Khabbab (Allah be pleased with him) which says that there were people who were slaughtered into two, but they did not give up their faith." Subhan Allah!

This was the courage, boldness, and sacrifice of the great Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him), to defend the Deen of Allah and to uphold the belief of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah resulting in him being known as Imamu Ahlis Sunnah.

Allah shower His mercy upon Imam Ahmad, grant us Iman equivalent to his and gift us the courage and determination to make sacrifices for our deen. Ameen

Reference - Taareekh Dawat wa Azeemat

Moral

This story always brings tears to my eyes. Punishment and torture is never easy. We can sit here holding this book in our hands but only those who have experienced torture and torment know the pain and anguish of suffering. Many of our pious predecessors ended up in prison for standing up for the truth and allowing it to reach us intact. They preferred the prison of this life to the prison of the hereafter (hellfire). They will enjoy flowing rivers of wine and milk and honey in Jannah, for the trials endured in this world. We should take heed from stories like this and hold a strong sense of protectiveness and defence for our Deen so that nobody has the audacity to belittle or taint it.

When Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal RH was imprisoned one of the guards asked him,

“So am I an aide of the oppressors?”

“No, the aide of the oppressors are those that comb your hair and wash your clothes and prepare your meals and buy and sell from you. As for you, you are one of the oppressors themselves.”

سُئِلَ الْإِمَامُ أَحْمَدُ بْنُ حَنْبَلٍ : أَلَمْ تُصَدِّكِ الْمَحْنُ عَنْ الطَّرِيقِ ؟
قَالَ : وَاللَّهِ لَوْ لَا الْمَحْنُ ؛ لَشَكَّكْتُ فِي الطَّرِيقِ ..
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَبْتَلِيكَ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كَانَ خَيْرًا لَكَ .. وَإِنْ ظَنَنْتَ الْعَكْسَ ..
أَرْحَ قَلْبَكَ .. فَلَوْلَا الْبَلَاءُ لَكَانَ يُوسُفُ مُدْلِلًا فِي حُضْنِ أَبِيهِ ..
وَلَكِنَّهُ مَعَ الْبَلَاءِ صَارَ عَزِيزًا مُصْرًا ..
وَمِنَ الْمُنْفَى رَجَعَ مُوسَى نَبِيًّا ...!
وَرَجَعَ سَيِّدُنَا مُحَمَّدٌ مِنَ الْمَهْجَرِ سَيِّدُ الْخَلْقِ فَاتِحًا ..
أَفِيضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بَعْدَ هَذَا ؟
كُونُوا عَلَى يَقِينٍ أَنَّ هُنَاكَ شَيْءٌ جَمِيلٌ يَنْتَظِرُكُمْ بَعْدَ الصَّبْرِ
لِيُبَهِّرَكُمْ وَيُنْسِيَكُمْ مِرَآةَ الْأَلَمِ

Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) was once asked: 'Did your trials not stop you from keeping steadfast on His (Allah) path?'

Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him) replied: 'If it were not for my trials I would have doubted this path, Allah only tests us with what's good for us, even if we think otherwise'.

Put your heart at ease... if it were not for trials Prophet Yusuf ﷺ would have been spoilt in the arms of his father but his trials made him the Chief of Egypt!

And out of exile Moosa ﷺ returned a Prophet!

And Prophet Muhammed ﷺ return from Hijrah a messenger to the whole of creation, opening Mecca and many other cities.

Understand with certainty, that there is something beautiful that awaits you after patience which will make you forget the bitterness of pain you endured.

"Prison is more beloved to me" (Surah Yusuf)

History has seen many of the great Islamic personalities arrested and imprisoned due to political motivations. Leaders, who see individuals as a threat to their rule, often try to silence and arrest them under bogus charges or misconstrued evidence. It continues till today and our brothers and sisters who have been unjustly imprisoned can take solace from the steadfastness and struggles of these great Islamic personalities who were unjustly imprisoned.

1. Yusuf ibn Ya'qub ؑ

Zulekha's failed attempt to seduce Prophet Yusuf ؑ led to his arrest and imprisonment. It can be argued that it was politically motivated as the news had spread of the incident in the town and people had begun gossiping about the 'Aziz and his wife's attempt to seduce her servant. The spread of this news would have led to the end of his political career and so, to stop this scandal further damaging his reputation, he had Yusuf ؑ imprisoned to make him look like the guilty one although evidence had proved otherwise.

2. Uthman ibn 'Affan (Allah be pleased with him)

Uthman ibn 'Affan (May Allah be pleased with him), the third Khalifah was effectively put under house arrest for 20 days by rebels who were not pleased with his governorship. Misunderstandings of his decisions and lies concocted by his adversaries had emboldened rebels to take arms and lay siege to his house.

They eventually attacked him causing him to become a martyr.

3. Imam Abu Hanifah (Allah have mercy upon him)

Abu Ja'far Al Mansur, the Abbasid ruler at the time offered Imam Abu Hanifah (Allah have mercy upon him) the post of Chief Judge, but he refused to accept the position saying he did not think he was fit for the role. He did not want to be part of the corrupt regime as history has seen that rulers often use scholars to issue edicts to justify their misdeeds. Taking this refusal as a challenge to his authority, Al Mansur had him arrested, thrown into prison and tortured. He continued to teach in prison until he passed away.

4. Imam Malik ibn Anas (Allah have mercy upon him)

The governor of Madinah forced people to take the oath of allegiance to Al Mansur, Imam Malik (Allah have mercy on him) issued a Fatwa that such an oath was not binding because it was forced. Imam Malik was arrested, found guilty of defiance and publicly flogged.

5. Imam Shafi'ee (Allah have mercy upon him)

Imam Shafi'ee (Allah have mercy upon him) was arrested and taken in chains to Baghdad on false charges of supporting rebels in Yemen. When the caliph of the time Harun Al Rashid met him, he was impressed with his learning and eloquence and released him from prison.

6. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Allah have mercy upon him)

Imam Ahmad's (Allah have mercy on him) refusal to accept the authority of the rulers of Mu'tazili doctrine and refusal to accept that the Qur'an was created rather than the uncreated speech of Allah led to his imprisonment in Baghdad during the reign of the Abbasid leader Al Mamun. During the rule of Al Mu'tasim, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal was flogged until he became unconscious. He was eventually released by Al Mutawakkil.

Allah free the prisoners of the Muslims who have been unjustly imprisoned. Allah grant patience to their families and protect their children. Ameen!

**“Knowledge is better than wealth since
knowledge protects you while you
protect wealth,
Knowledge increases when you share it
while wealth decreases,
Knowledge is a judge while wealth is
judged over.”**

— ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (Allah ennoble his countenance)

Al-Fudhayl ibn ‘Iyadh (Allah have mercy upon him)

Al-Fudhayl ibn ‘Iyadh (Allah have mercy upon him) was famous for his piety and worship, but he was not always a practising Muslim. In his early years, Al-Fudayl (Allah have mercy upon him) was an infamous highway robber; he would prowl in the night for victims on the road from Abu Ward to Sarakhas. Between these two cities was a small village in which lived a girl that Al-Fudayl (Allah have mercy upon him) was in love with. One night, out of desperation to be with her, Al-Fudayl (Allah have mercy upon him) climbed the wall of her home. As he was climbing over it, he heard a voice recite,

"Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah?"
(57:16).

At that moment, Al-Fudayl (Allah have mercy upon him) answered, "O my Lord, the time has indeed come." He returned from where he came and sought refuge near a travelling party on the main road. They were busy engaging in a serious discussion. Al-Fudayl (Allah have mercy upon him) heard one of them say, "Let us continue our journey now." Another answered, "No, not until the morning, for Al-Fudayl is lurking on the road somewhere out there, just waiting to rob us."

Having heard the entire conversation, Al-Fudayl (Allah have mercy upon him) thought to himself, "I go around in the night to sin, while a group of Muslims remain here because they fear me. Indeed I feel that Allah has brought me here to them only so that I can reform my character. O Allah, I indeed repent to you!"

Moral

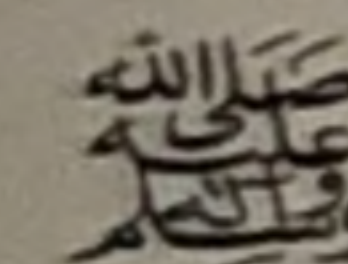
What we can learn from this story is that no matter how sinful a person is, there is always a chance that they may turn back to Allah in repentance. Since we do not know people's futures, we should hope for their guidance. Sometimes the worst of people can become the best of people as what happened with many of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Umar

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Abide by truthfulness. For indeed truthfulness leads to righteousness. And indeed righteousness leads to Paradise. A man continues telling the truth and trying hard to tell the truth until he is recorded with Allah as a truthful person. Refrain from falsehood. For indeed falsehood leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. A slave (of Allah) continues lying and trying hard to lie, until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.”

(Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 27, Hadith 77)

Insulting the Prophet



In the year 1258 (675 A.H.) there lived a Mongolian tyrant by the name of Haloko who invaded Baghdad and killed thousands of Islamic scholars. This paved the way for Christian missionaries to preach Christianity and convert Muslims openly. Haloko himself was married to a Christian woman. One day, a delegation of the most notable Christians headed for Baghdad to attend a grand party to celebrate the conversion of a key Mongolian leader to Christianity. The Mongolian leader had his favourite hunting dog on a leash nearby. One of the Christians then began congratulating the Mongolian leader on his wise decision and then proceeded to revile the blessed character of the Prophet ﷺ.

The dog started acting violently and began barking ferociously. This continued for a long while and the dog, whilst on its leash, became uncontrollable until it eventually jumped on the Christian, brutally attacking him. It took several men to pull away the angry dog. One of the attendees turned to the Christian and said, "The dog did this because of what you said about Muhammad." The Christian brushed aside the man's comment and arrogantly said, "No, that was not the reason for the dog's reaction. When I was speaking, I pointed with my hand and the dog thought that I was going to hit him." The Christian appeared unmoved by the incident and continued to insult the Prophet ﷺ.

At that time, the dog, in such a rage, cut itself loose from its bonds, jumped on the Christian and sank its molars in the man's neck. The dog ripped his throat out and the man died immediately. This incident caused a lot of Mongolians to embrace Islam.

Moral

This story mentions what happened to a person who insulted the Prophet ﷺ. Incidents like this have taken place throughout history, where a person has insulted the Prophet ﷺ and then has been met with a degrading end. If this is what reaction a dog has when the Prophet ﷺ is abused and mocked, what about you and I? We are hesitant to boycott those countries that make a mockery of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, make excuses for them and take the passive and apathetic option. We struggle to disassociate ourselves from these groups and people. We are afraid to sign petitions and stand in protests against those who draw satirical cartoons and revolting images of the Leader of Mankind, Mercy to the World and the Most Compassionate of the creation, our beloved Messenger Muhammad ﷺ.

You will be aware of the Danish Newspaper that printed cartoons in 2005 and caused global controversy. In 2007, when I travelled to Saharanpur, India, I heard my beloved Shaykh and Ustadh Hadhrat Mawlana Muhammad Yunus Saheb Jawnpuri (Allah sanctify his secret) had also attended a protest that took place in Saharanpur - an old Shaykh in his 70s on a wheelchair showing his love and support to this cause. This is a reminder to those who object to protests and petitions, arguing that 'it doesn't make a difference.' But the same people will be happy to stand in long queues for hours and hours at shopping centres for the sales, channelling their energy in the wrong direction.

Allah ignite the fire of love for Muhammad ﷺ in our hearts. Ameen.

His name was Muhammad ﷺ, from the root word 'hamd' to praise.

His father's name was Abdullah RA, from the root word 'uboodiyyah' to worship.

His mother's name was Aminah RA, from the root word 'Amn' peace.

His wet-nurse was Haleemah RA, from the root word 'hilm' forbearance.

His carer was Umm Ayman RA, from the root word 'yumn' barakah and blessings.

If these were the people around the Messenger ﷺ imagine the honour and dignity of such a noble being.”

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Lion of the Desert: Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him)

Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) was born in the year 1858 in an impoverished household in the region of Cyrenaica, which was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. As a young individual, Omar lost his father and spent much of his youth in poverty. He was taken under the care and guidance of one of the scholars in his home town. Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) was known to have developed a lifestyle of not sleeping more than three hours every night to worship Allah at the last third of the night and to then recite Qur'an until Fajr. He had memorised the Qur'an in its entirety and was known as a humble and deeply religious man. He was reported to have completed the recitation of the Qur'an in its entirety every seven days, irrespective of the trials and tribulations he faced in his life. His wisdom and courage were evident in his life, and as such, an example for people to learn and follow.

The Lion's historical summary

Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) etched his name in the annals of history when he valiantly defended his people, their property and honour by engaging the noble concept of Jihād against the brute of European colonialism. Arguably, the act of resisting an armed occupation through an armed means was later protected under international law. It is reported that our hero Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) earned his nickname as Asad al-Sahara' – 'Lion of the Desert' – during his caravan trails to Sudan as a young man. Such a journey was fraught with dangers not least of it being on the route of a fearsome lion. On one such journey, Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) decided to face the danger head-on, when with a shotgun in hand and on horseback, he pursued the lion and killed it [1]. Omar (Allah

have mercy upon him) lived a simple life as a teacher having been educated in the schools of the powerful Sanusi Sufi order [2].

Despotic Occupation

In 1911 however, the Italians grabbed Libya from the disintegrating Ottoman Caliphate when Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) was approximately 53 years of age. The Italian fascists, led by Benito Mussolini, referred to the invasion of Libya as the 'Roman Reconquista' – "reclaiming" lands which once fell under Roman rule.

Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) was deeply concerned about the occupation of their land which had been forcibly and inhumanely taken away from them. He proclaimed that it was their God-given right to resist such injustice as he refused to be conquered. The event marked the beginning of a series of battles between the Italian occupiers and the Muslim forces led by Omar (Allah have mercy upon him).

The Lion's resistance

Omar's skills of guerrilla warfare, his strength, spirit and zeal would put to shame some of the world's most powerful armies at the time, with its superior modern weaponry and men half his age, to shame. Against Italian tanks and aeroplanes, Omar's (Allah have mercy upon him) active fighters numbered between 1,000 and 3,000, on horseback. For the most part they were lightly armed, yet still trounced Mussolini's armed forces almost daily, fighting more than 250 skirmishes and engagements a year. To counter this, the Italian fascists set up concentration camps to target civilians. In 1930, up to 100,000 Bedouin men, women and children – about half the tribal population of Cyrenaica at the time – were herded into desert camps where many died. Much like today with the approach of Israel in their war with Palestinians, the more defeats they would suffer, the more severe the punishments they would afflict on civilians [3].

After 20 years of resisting and inflicting severe defeats and setbacks to their unwanted European invaders, Allah sought to elevate Omar's (Allah have mercy upon him) rank in the hereafter (In Sha Allah) and immortalise his heroic status in this earthly life when He, in His wisdom permitted that Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) is captured and wounded by Italian colonial forces in 1931. In captivity, Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) was made lucrative offers by the Italians to end the resistance to which he responded that he would not cease to resist...

"Until I achieve one of the two highest levels; martyrdom or victory. And I swear by Him who knows what is in men's hearts that if my hands were not bound this very moment, I would fight you with my bare hands, old and broken as I am"[4].

At the time of his hanging when asked if he wished to say any last words, he replied with the Qur'anic response, "Inna Lillah wa inna ilayha rajioon" - Certainly from Allah we have come, and to Allah we will return. Twenty thousand concentration camp inmates and Cyrenaican notables were forced to watch Omar Mukhtar's (Allah have mercy upon him) death.

Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) is well-known for his various statements that only further exemplifies his fearless, brave and courageous character. One of his most recalled and inspirational statements is when he remarked, "We'll never surrender, we'll win or die - you've got to fight the next generation and the next...and I'll live more than my hanger."

Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) was also known for applying justice and holding to the principles of Islam. During one incident Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him), protected two surviving Italian prisoners, stating, "We do not kill prisoners". His

warrior said, "They do it to us." To which he responded with these majestic words, "They are not our teachers."

The struggle of Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) should continue to inspire Muslims in an age where the colonialists and imperialists, which started their break-down of Muslim lands at the time of Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him), has continued unabated today through the use of their agents, dictators, 'terrorist' groups and despots, whom they had played a hand in installing to continue their dominance over the Muslim world.

the symbol of resistance

Indeed, right to this very day, Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) is recognised as a symbol of resistance in the Muslim world. This was not on account of him sitting quietly whilst injustice, tyranny and oppression descended and spread in the land, but rather because he courageously stood up having full certainty of the promise of Allah and exemplified the verse in the Glorious Qur'an,

"How often has a small party vanquished a numerous host by Allah's permission, and Allah is with the patient" [5].

Commenting on this verse, Prominent Islamic thinker Syed Qutb (Allah have mercy upon him) says,

"Certainly, they had the advantage of faith in their cause and trust in their leader, but the harsh reality of the situation told them they were the weaker side, and that their faith would be put to the test. Would that invisible force of faith triumph? How strong was their faith in Allah, and would they be able to harness that force in their favour and prevail?"

At that decisive moment, a small group of true believers stood up to express their faith, **"But those of them who were certain that they**

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would meet their Lord said, 'How often has a small host triumphed over a large host by Allah's grace. Allah is with those who remain patient in adversity' (2:49).

To the believer's mind, that is the way it should be - believers are always numerically less than their enemies because they need to sacrifice more and work harder to earn Allah's grace and pleasure. But they triumph because they draw their strength from Allah Almighty and their faith in Him. The believers are aware that their victory comes from Allah as a reward for their patience and perseverance" [6].

Young Muslims must revisit the life and thoughts of these great exemplars to gain confidence and to unite to free themselves and the Ummah from the grip of the enduring imperialism and colonialism by being upholders of justice and speaking truth to power. It is also worth reminding those who seek to pigeonhole Muslims to divide them by portraying some as 'violent' and others as 'peaceful', that Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) was, in fact, a Sufi, part of a group who are today often thought of as being pacifist or otherwise compatible with western supremacy.

We should not let those in contemporary times who claim to wear the garb of Sufism and "peace", whilst being complicit and providing cover for the crimes of dictators such as Sisi in Egypt or Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya as well as others, to misrepresent to us the great tradition of Sufis who have always fought (with their words and deeds) to defend themselves and their communities from aggression and oppression.

A man who was firm in his faith at a time when others fled or surrendered to the occupiers – Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) had reliance on the Almighty deeply rooted in his heart. He was a man whom not only regularly read but acted upon and held his Qur'an high vowing to Allah that he would not discontinue his fight against the occupiers of his land. He strongly believed in this to such an extent that

it didn't bother him if he was alone in this fight until victory had been achieved or that he had attained the righteous status of a martyr. He had directed, guided and personally participated in 1000 battles in the last twenty years of his worldly life.

On the 16th September 1931 Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) at the age of 73, was executed and hanged to martyrdom by Italian colonial forces. We ask that Allah grants Omar Mukhtar (rahimahullāh) and all those who were killed unjustly Jannat al-Firdaus and that He brings about much greater good for their people in this world and the next.

Moral

We can certainly say he lived up to his name, a true lion! Another illustrious example of how numbers don't mean anything in Islam, Allah's army is the greatest. Once Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) protected two surviving Italian prisoners, saying, "We do not kill prisoners." His fellow warrior said, "They do it to us!" Omar responded with these majestic words, "They are not our teachers."

Source: www.islam21c.com

Notes:

- [1] Politics of Convenience!: Upset the Balance of Power, by Go Pal
- [2] The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932, by Ali Abdullatif Ahmida
- [3] Politics of Convenience!: Upset the Balance of Power, by Go Pal
- [4] Omar al-Mukhtar: The Italian Reconquest of Libya (1986) by Enzo Santarelli, Giorgio Rochat, Romain Rainero and Luigi Goglia, as translated by John Gilbert
- [5] Al-Qur'an 2:249
- [6] Fi Zilal al-Qur'an, Surah 2 (Al-Baqarah)

would meet their Lord said, 'How often has a small host triumphed over a large host by Allah's grace. Allah is with those who remain patient in adversity' (2:49).

To the believer's mind, that is the way it should be - believers are always numerically less than their enemies because they need to sacrifice more and work harder to earn Allah's grace and pleasure. But they triumph because they draw their strength from Allah Almighty and their faith in Him. The believers are aware that their victory comes from Allah as a reward for their patience and perseverance" [6].

Young Muslims must revisit the life and thoughts of these great exemplars to gain confidence and to unite to free themselves and the Ummah from the grip of the enduring imperialism and colonialism by being upholders of justice and speaking truth to power. It is also worth reminding those who seek to pigeonhole Muslims to divide them by portraying some as 'violent' and others as 'peaceful', that Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) was, in fact, a Sufi, part of a group who are today often thought of as being pacifist or otherwise compatible with western supremacy.

We should not let those in contemporary times who claim to wear the garb of Sufism and "peace", whilst being complicit and providing cover for the crimes of dictators such as Sisi in Egypt or Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya as well as others, to misrepresent to us the great tradition of Sufis who have always fought (with their words and deeds) to defend themselves and their communities from aggression and oppression.

A man who was firm in his faith at a time when others fled or surrendered to the occupiers – Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) had reliance on the Almighty deeply rooted in his heart. He was a man whom not only regularly read but acted upon and held his Qur'an high vowing to Allah that he would not discontinue his fight against the occupiers of his land. He strongly believed in this to such an extent that

it didn't bother him if he was alone in this fight until victory had been achieved or that he had attained the righteous status of a martyr. He had directed, guided and personally participated in 1000 battles in the last twenty years of his worldly life.

On the 16th September 1931 Omar Mukhtar (Allah have mercy upon him) at the age of 73, was executed and hanged to martyrdom by Italian colonial forces. We ask that Allah grants Omar Mukhtar (rahimahullāh) and all those who were killed unjustly Jannat al-Firdaus and that He brings about much greater good for their people in this world and the next.

Moral

We can certainly say he lived up to his name, a true lion! Another illustrious example of how numbers don't mean anything in Islam, Allah's army is the greatest. Once Omar (Allah have mercy upon him) protected two surviving Italian prisoners, saying, "We do not kill prisoners." His fellow warrior said, "They do it to us!" Omar responded with these majestic words, "They are not our teachers."

Source: www.islam21c.com

Notes:

- [1] Politics of Convenience!: Upset the Balance of Power, by Go Pal
- [2] The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932, by Ali Abdullatif Ahmida
- [3] Politics of Convenience!: Upset the Balance of Power, by Go Pal
- [4] Omar al-Mukhtar: The Italian Reconquest of Libya (1986) by Enzo Santarelli, Giorgio Rochat, Romain Rainero and Luigi Goglia, as translated by John Gilbert
- [5] Al-Qur'an 2:249
- [6] Fi Zilal al-Qur'an, Surah 2 (Al-Baqarah)

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ عِبَادًا أَقْطَنَّا

تَرَكُوا الدُّنْيَا وَخَافُوا الْفِتْنَا

نَظَرُوا فِيهَا فَلَمَّا عَلِمُوا

أَنَّهَا لَيْسَتْ لِلْحَيِّ وَطَنًا

جَعَلُوهَا لِحَيَّةٍ وَاتَّخَذُوا

صَالِحِ الْأَعْمَالِ فِيهَا سَفُنًا

(أبو عبد الله محمد بن إدريس الشافعي المصطفي القرشي (150-204 هـ / 767-820 م))

“Verily, there are brave slaves of Allah,
Who have divorced this world and they fear trials,
They looked into it and had realised,
That this is not the place for the living.
They made it (the trials) as waves and took,
The righteous deeds as ships sailing through it.”

Malcolm: Little to X

Certain names throughout history truly define their medium.

Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him) is one such individual. Many people become captivated when his name is mentioned and conjure up images they might have seen on the TV or movies or be familiar with many of his famous quotes, but we must remember that no human being can be understood in simplistic terms; there is always a string of factors, influences and influencers in a person's life. The knowledge of his life should not be limited to an awareness of his gripping speeches, his timeless quotes, his bold demeanour and his unapologetic stance against oppression, for there is a lot more that could be said about him.

There is no future for a person who is oblivious of their past. Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him) played a vital role in the past. The story of this individual, since his assassination on February 22nd 1965, has perhaps resulted in hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people embracing Islam and others solidifying their faith and Islamic identity because of his struggle.

The former chief judge of Damascus, Imam al-Subki (Allah have mercy upon him), once said, “Whoever relates the tale of a Muslim, it is as if he has given him life.” This story will endeavour to give a brief overview of exactly that, covering the legacy and martyrdom of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him), with relevant passages from his acclaimed autobiography co-authored with Alex Haley. When you study history, you will quickly realise that Islam was often not carried forward by the unblemished souls, but by reformed ones.

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أَنَّهَا لَيْسَتْ لِحَيٍّ وَطَنًا

جَعَلُوهَا لِحَيَّةً وَاتَّخَذُوا

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An Oppressive Childhood

Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him) was born in 1925 as Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska. He was an African American living in a time of entrenched racism. What were the ramifications for a black person living in America at a time of forceful segregation? There would be bathrooms for blacks and bathrooms for whites. In cinemas, there would be particular seats for whites and particular seats for blacks, among many other strategies to separate people by colour.

Malcolm's father was Earl Little, a Baptist minister inspired by the work of Marcus Garvey. Garvey propagated a message that African Americans would never be able to live in peace and harmony with their white neighbours and that the only hope of their salvation was to move back to their roots in Africa. Malcolm's father was a wealthy individual although his wealth was not enough a reason to divert attention from him from white racists when he chose to live in a predominantly white area and his neighbours began to pressurise him to move to a black district.

Malcolm's father received constant threats from white supremacists which later led to the firebombing of his home. When Malcolm was 6 years old, his father was tied up, run over by a car, and killed. Malcolm also lost other relatives to violence, including an uncle who was lynched by white supremacists.

In the latter part of the 19th century, lynching was an act committed typically by mobs taking black people (from the street, prison, or even their homes) and hanging them in public. This era in America also marked the rise of cinematography and the big screen. A crowd of 3000 people came to witness the lynching of Will Mack in 1909. People would buy popcorn, soda pop and even take artefacts of the deceased's clothing after the event. It became a public spectacle to see a black man being lynched. Photographers would be present at these

events, snapping pre-lynching and post-lynching photographs, as well as photographs of victims who would be lynched and burnt alive. In such an environment, one would naturally feel unsafe, constantly undermined, devalued, and dehumanised, with one's entire sense of belonging and existence questioned. Malcolm's mother fell victim to this, suffering a nervous breakdown after which she was sent to a mental asylum, causing Malcolm and his siblings to be sent to separate homes.

Although Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) excelled in his academic studies, he went to an all-white school and it was in this school that Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) experienced a major turning point in his life, one that would go on to shape his future. Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) told his English teacher, Mr Ostrowski, about his plans and aspirations of becoming a lawyer. His teacher told the young Malcolm that the legal profession is not a reasonable occupation for a black person, and advised him instead to try to become a carpenter — something more suitable to the station in life in which his colour placed him. Apart from the discriminatory vocabulary, what upset Malcolm, even more, was that Mr Ostrowski had encouraged students who were less academic achievers than himself to enter difficult professions. Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) concluded that he was being judged based on his colour rather than his capabilities. He subsequently lost interest and ended his formal education the following year, at the age of 15.

When he was out of school, he went to live with his sister in Detroit, and soon took to a life of crime. He was a very young and impressionable man, known as "Detroit Red". He became a street hustler, gangster, drug dealer, drug addict, criminal, thug and pimp. He committed crimes, burglaries, and was arrested on three occasions as a result. He spent 6 years in prison from 1946-1952, a time he described in his autobiography as the beginning of his transformation.

Education Behind Bars

Everyone goes through a transformation in their life. Different factors can cause this transformation: trauma, death, or illness. As you have read above, Malcolm X was affected by a wealth of factors that caused the change that would dictate how the rest of his life would pan out. His behaviour, thought process and decision-making that led to his imprisonment was also affected.

When he arrived in prison, Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) noticed there were different groups in prison, and the person who commanded the most respect was the intelligent one.

He said in his biography,

"As you can imagine, especially in a prison where there was a heavy emphasis on rehabilitation, an inmate was smiled upon if he demonstrated an unusually intense interest in books. There was a sizable number of well-read inmates, especially the popular debaters. Some were said by many to be practically walking encyclopaedias. They were almost celebrities. No university would ask any student to devour literature as I did when this new world opened to me, of being able to read and understand."

In his autobiography, Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) spoke of a prisoner known as 'Bimbi' who he deemed to be an intelligent, literate, educated, and articulate man. Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) attributed to him one of the key moments of change in his life.

"Bimbi seldom said much to me; he was gruff to individuals, but I sensed he liked me. What made me seek his friendship was when I heard him discuss religion. I considered myself beyond atheism – I was Satan. But Bimbi put the atheist philosophy in a framework, so to speak. That ended my vicious cursing attacks. My approach sounded so weak alongside his, and he never used a foul word."

Out of the blue, one day Bimbi told me flatly as was his way, that I had some brains if I'd use them. I had wanted his friendship not that kind of advice. I might have cursed another convict, but nobody cursed Bimbi. He told me I should take advantage of the prison correspondence courses and the library."

His motivation to seek education is what gave rise to his profound abilities as an orator and public speaker, which would later see him be invited to deliver a speech at the University of Oxford. Malcolm would go on to say that due to this gift, people would assume he has a long list of credentials. In reality, he had nothing to show after his 8th grade of school. The only place he would learn was in prison by learning and re-educating himself.

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

"Without education, you're not going anywhere in this world."

With learning comes self-realisation, self-discovery and self-exploration. Learning heightens a person's ability to connect with his Lord because, as a result, that person will know his Lord.

Allah says in the Qur'an,

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" [1]

And the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

"Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise" [2].

Our crisis today is that we remain as passive reciprocates of the information we receive. This is a ramification of social and visual media platforms that contain millions of screenshots passing before our eyes daily. Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) did not share this fate. Instead, he took initiative. He wrote out the entire dictionary to be familiar with words. He did not disallow himself of education due to his circumstance of being put into prison. Rather, he took advantage of an opportunity he had no control over and came out of prison a new individual.

Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) understood that when you read, you transition into someone else's shoes and become immersed in their experiences, seeing the world through their lens. The importance of knowing your audience, as well as identifying and challenging them, is crucial in the process of enacting social and political reform. Malcolm X spent his post-prison life acting on what he had learnt about history, civilisation, law, and most importantly, black suffering.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (Allah be pleased with him) said,
"Learn, so that after you have learnt, you can act" [3].

Little to X

The obvious context of the suffering of African Americans is because they were the descendants of slaves. The transatlantic slave trade, which existed from the 16th to the 19th century, involved the transportation of slaves from West Africa by ships mainly to the Americas against their will. Nearly a third of the slaves were Muslims. Some chose the path of suicide by jumping overboard. Others chose the path of fighting back against the captains of the ships and there were many small and large rebellions when slaves arrived in the Americas. Those who made it to the Americas were relegated to sub-

human entities by being sold as slaves, separated from their families, and deprived of the outward bond of unity.

Here, they were given surnames of their slave masters, losing their identity and personalisation. In different cultures, a name arises from an unseen network of tribal connections that are all involved in giving such names. So to gain that sense of self-identity that was once lost at the hands of his oppressors, Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) gave himself the name 'X', meaning unknown for his true ancestry was unknown.

The Nation of Islam

It is important to note that there is nothing 'Islamic' about the Nation of Islam. Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) was introduced to the organisation in prison, with their leader Elijah Poole later becoming Elijah Muhammad, who claimed to be a prophet to black people and introduced them to theological beliefs that do not concur with Islam. Elijah Muhammad taught his followers not to fear the white man because the black man is superior and dominant over the white man. At the time when Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) was incarcerated, the Nation of Islam only had 500 adherents. Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) used his knowledge to write letters to different people; old friends, gangsters and Elijah Muhammad himself, who Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) would later visit after being freed from prison.

Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) quickly grew into a prominent figure for the group, becoming a minister of the main mosque in Harlem. The membership of the Nation of Islam began to grow rapidly; by the 1960s, there were around 75,000 members. A separate military wing called the 'Fruits of Islam' taught self-defence classes, existing as a vanguard of resistance against white brutality that black people may

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face in their day-to-day life. He also set up a newspaper called 'Muhammad Speaks' that propagated the ideas of the Nation of Islam.

Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) travelled all over the country debating civil rights leaders, including Dr Martin Luther King Jr. The leaders he debated with proposed different solutions to deal with the same problem. Malcolm's (Allah have mercy upon him) methodology was to make peace with those who want peace, and violence with those who want violence. Turning to violence was not his first call, but he refused to turn the other cheek against degradation, abuse and murder. He became a controversial figure in the American media for challenging ideas on white exceptionalism and calling for equal rights.

This led to Malcolm (Allah have mercy upon him) being under the close surveillance of the FBI, NYPD and the CIA, with the latter aiming to infiltrate the Nation of Islam. Edgar Hoover, the then-head of the FBI, became concerned about Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him). The FBI plotted to create a rift between the two leaders, Malcolm and Elijah, to sow the seeds of discord. In the year 1962, Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him) came to discover through the son of Elijah, Wallace Muhammad, that Elijah had fathered six illegitimate children with women in the Nation of Islam. At the same time, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Elijah Muhammad instructed the Nation of Islam to refrain from making any comments in the media. After a lecture, Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him) was quizzed by the media on his thoughts about the assassination, to which he famously replied,

"Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they always made me glad."

Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him) was referring here to Kennedy's assassination as a taste of the violence that America had been inflicting around the world. He was plastered in the media as

someone who was joyous at the death of the late president. He was also suspended from speaking to the media for 90 days by the Nation of Islam, after specifically being told not to comment on the assassination. During this time, which gave him more autonomy and freedom, he travelled to the Middle East, including the Holy Land of Makkah. This is what some call 'the transformative last year of his life'.

Malcolm in Makkah

In the latter years of his life, Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) reinvented himself to an even greater degree. The evolution of his faith and maturity took another direction when he travelled to Makkah for the pilgrimage – the Hajj. This would be the point in his life where he would transition to the truth, orthodox Sunni Islam, after having first transitioned to falsehood in the form of the Nation of Islam. His message and policy would take a noticeable change with him now fighting for justice for all.

He said, "I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being, first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole."

His outreach spread beyond the suffering of only black people in America, although it was his primary concern. During the Hajj, Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) had some of his deepest spiritual enlightenments, as millions have every year when they travel to perform the pilgrimage.

"I only knew what I had left in America, and how it contrasted with what I found in the Muslim world."

It was after returning from his pilgrimage to Makkah that Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) adopted the title and name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. As Muslims, we need to take heed that other people are watching us and slowly building their perception of Islam through us.

This highlights the importance of outward actions and engaging with the outer world, not solely within our inner circles. As the above statement reminds us, even though we may not be as cognisant that there is an outer circle witnessing what is happening in our inner circle, others most certainly are.

When he was asked what impressed him the most about the Hajj, Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) replied, "The brotherhood!"

"The people of all races, colour, from all over the world coming together as one! It has proved to me the power of the One God."

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practised by people of all colours and races here in this Ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures."

Despite job offers from Africa to be a head of state, Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) chose to return to America with a new vision. He was afire with new spiritual insight and a higher standard of religious observance, still desperate to pursue justice and challenge tyranny.

"America needs to understand Islam because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered white, but the white attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam."

As Allah says,

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاجْتِلَاءُ اللَّسَانِ وَالْوَلَوَانِ

"Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours."

The Prophet ﷺ said,

"Allāh does not look at your appearances or your financial status, but He looks at your hearts and your actions" [4].

Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) was now moving away from the Nation of Islam and the black supremacist ideology they were upon. He moved towards true Islam – but this was not without its challenges and consequences.

The Last Stand

On his return to America, Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) set up two organisations: Muslim Mosque, Inc. (which taught people about Islam) and the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) acknowledged that he was "living on borrowed time", openly declaring that Elijah Muhammad was not who he set out to be, and thus alarming the Nation of Islam.

Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) appeared to be embarking on an ideological journey with a shift in both his political and spiritual stances. This had the potential to dramatically alter the course of the civil rights movement. Tragically, he was assassinated on February 21 1965 while preparing to give a speech at a New York theatre. While it is clear that the Nation of Islam was involved in the assassination, many people believe others such as the FBI also had a hand in his murder.

Earlier, in his days with the Nation of Islam Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) was at odds with Dr Martin Luther King Jr.'s methodology, the two holding drastically opposing views on the struggle for equal rights. However a year before his death in 1964, Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) sent a telegram to Dr Martin

Luther King Jr., who was due to hold a march that would have seen members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) causing trouble.

In his telegram, Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) said,

"We have been witnessing with great concern the vicious attacks of the white races against our poor defenceless people there in St. Augustine. If the Federal Government will not send troops to your aid, just say the word and we will immediately dispatch some of our brothers there to organise self-defence units amongst our people and the Ku Klux Klan will then receive a taste of its own medicine. The day of turning the other cheek to those brute beasts is over."

Malcolm (Allah have mercy on him) then sent a telegram to the leader of the KKK warning him that he would bring his men to defend Dr Martin Luther King Jr. should the KKK disrupt his rally. He threatened the white supremacists that he and his men would defend King and his people "by any means necessary."

To conclude, there are many lessons we can learn from the life story of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him). He was a man who lived by principles of bravery, courage, and resistance, he was also intellectually disciplined, a man who recognised that the plight and suffering of others are much bigger than one's own, he promoted Islam in a time of great hostility. Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) addressed imperialism, racism, and othering – discussions that are still prevalent in our time. The concern of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) is the concern of us all. He placed self-sacrifice above self-interest. He taught not only moral compassion but also moral consistency and above all, he applied the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ:

"The best type of Jihad is speaking a word of truth in the presence of a tyrant ruler" [5].

What separates Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) before all those who predated him – and all those that followed him – is that he did so by any means necessary.

Allah have mercy on our brother, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.

Moral

There are many lessons to derive from the life of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him). First and foremost, no matter what your beginnings are, actions are judged as per their ending. Look at where Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) started and what trouble he got into. Then we look at his passionate and fanatical following of Elijah Muhammad. In his own words, "I loved Elijah more than Elijah loved himself." But Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) was sincere and had a clean heart, hence Allah guided him to the correct version of Sunni Islam in its most pure form. We also learn that when you are outspoken, truthful and honest, your enemy circle grows and sometimes it can even cost you your life. Allah grant us these qualities. Ameen

Source: www.Islam21c.com

Notes:

Based on a lecture by Dr Uthman Lateef

[1] Al-Qur'ān, 39:9

[2] Sahih Muslim

[3] Fadl 'Ilm al-Salaf

[4] Bukhari

[5] Ibn Majah

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“We have been witnessing with great concern the vicious attacks of the white races against our poor defenceless people there in St. Augustine. If the Federal Government will not send troops to your aid, just say the word and we will immediately dispatch some of our brothers there to organise self-defence units amongst our people and the Ku Klux Klan will then receive a taste of its own medicine. The day of turning the other cheek to those brute beasts is over.”

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To conclude, there are many lessons we can learn from the life story of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him). He was a man who lived by principles of bravery, courage, and resistance, he was also intellectually disciplined, a man who recognised that the plight and suffering of others are much bigger than one’s own, he promoted Islam in a time of great hostility. Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) addressed imperialism, racism, and othering – discussions that are still prevalent in our time. The concern of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) is the concern of us all. He placed self-sacrifice above self-interest. He taught not only moral compassion but also moral consistency and above all, he applied the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ:

“The best type of Jihad is speaking a word of truth in the presence of a tyrant ruler” [5].

What separates Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) before all those who predated him – and all those that followed him – is that he did so by any means necessary.

Allah have mercy on our brother, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.

Moral

There are many lessons to derive from the life of Malcolm X (Allah have mercy upon him). First and foremost, no matter what your beginnings are, actions are judged as per their ending. Look at where Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) started and what trouble he got into. Then we look at his passionate and fanatical following of Elijah Muhammad. In his own words, “I loved Elijah more than Elijah loved himself.” But Malcolm X (Allah have mercy on him) was sincere and had a clean heart, hence Allah guided him to the correct version of Sunni Islam in its most pure form. We also learn that when you are outspoken, truthful and honest, your enemy circle grows and sometimes it can even cost you your life. Allah grant us these qualities. Ameen

Source: www.Islam21c.com

Notes:

Based on a lecture by Dr Uthman Lateef

[1] Al-Qur’ān, 39:9

[2] Sahih Muslim

[3] Fadl ‘Ilm al-Salaf

[4] Bukhari

[5] Ibn Majah

**“I'm for truth, no matter who
tells it.**

**I'm for justice, no matter who it
is for or against.**

**I'm a human being first and
foremost, and as such I'm for
whoever and whatever benefits
humanity as a whole.”**

Malcolm X

The Prisoners of Malta

L.H. Clements —

2



During the First World War, a group of Indian scholars and freedom fighters led by the head lecturer at Dar al-'Uloom Deoband, Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (Allah have mercy upon him) was interned by the Allies on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean for anti-colonial activities. Their story is one of dedication, struggle and endurance, something that has captivated the imagination of many generations of people from the Sub-Continent. As a result, modern Muslim explorers visiting Malta often comment that there is little information about where these Indian freedom fighters were exactly incarcerated from February 1917 until their release in 1920.

The island of Malta in the Mediterranean became a part of the British Empire in 1814 and remained so until its independence in 1964. The island was used as a shipping way-station and fleet headquarters by Britain, and was particularly important following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. It was considered an important stop on the way to

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India from the UK and during the First World War became known as the Nurse of the Mediterranean due to the large number of wounded Allied soldiers housed there. The island's capital, Valletta was also the location of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet's headquarters prior to the Second World War. This command was subsequently moved to Alexandria, Egypt in 1937.

Just over a kilometre from Valletta Harbour is Fort Verdala (also known as Verdala Barracks) that the British built in the 1850s and used to house British military until 1977. During both the First and Second World Wars, Fort Verdala was used as a Prisoner of War (POW) camp. Verdala also had a section known as St Clement's Retrenchment. During World War One, POWs were kept in several camps in Malta located a short distance from Valletta Harbour where the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet was headquartered. These POW camps were Verdala Barracks, Salvatore Fort and Polverista Barracks.

There are several books that mention Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Mahmud Hasan, Shaykh al-Islam Mawlana Husain Ahmad Madani (Allah have mercy upon them), the Silk Handkerchief Movement and their incarceration in Malta: *Naqsh-i-Hayat, Asiran-i-Malta, Tahrik-i-Reyshmi Rumal*, Husain Ahmad Madani – *The Jihad for Islam and India's Freedom* by Barbara D. Metcalf, and Mawlana Husain Ahmad Madani – *A Biographical Study* by D.R. Goyal. All of these books are excellent resources in understanding the contribution of Muslim Indian scholars in the independence struggle. While they all mention that these Indian freedom fighters were in Malta during First World War, they do not specify where they were exactly interned.

Probably, the most detailed book on our elders' time in Malta is in Shaykh al-Islam's travelogue, *The Prisoners of Malta*. There are several reasons why I believe that the scholars were interned at Fort Verdala. In his travelogue, Mawlana Hussain Madani (Allah have mercy upon

him) mentions that on arrival at a Maltese port on 21 February 1917, Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (Allah have mercy upon him) was transported to the prison camp by vehicle whereas he himself and the rest of the group were marched to the 'camp'. Being an island, there would most likely be several ports on Malta and it would only make sense for the Allies to have brought POWs to its military port which was located at Valletta Harbour. It would also be assumed that with so many POWs in transit, the place of their imprisonment should be close to Valletta Harbour. On arrival, Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (Allah have mercy upon him) was transported in a vehicle due to old age whilst his companions were marched to their place of imprisonment, something that tells us that the POW camp must have been in walking distance from Valletta Harbour.

In his travelogue, Mawlana Husain Madani (Allah have mercy upon him) does not mention Fort Verdala per se. Instead, he describes the place of their incarceration as a large castle or fort (*qila'*) consisting of fortified walls, moats, trenches, open spaces and many buildings. He also mentions that this fort was built for soldiers and was used as a POW camp during the war. Fort Verdala fits this description, having initially been built in the 1850s as a military barracks. He also mentions that the castle was sectioned into different areas using barbed wire with each area given a different name.

Mawlana Husain Madani (Allah have mercy upon him) also mentions in detail the Ottoman Military Cemetery in Marsa and provides a diagram of its layout. It was here that Mawlana Husain Madani (Allah have mercy upon him) washed and shrouded a fellow Ottoman prisoner who was executed for murder and then subsequently buried. Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (Allah have mercy upon him) and his companions would also often visit the grave of this soldier whenever they visited the cemetery.

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During his famous speech at Bahawalpur in 1983, Mawlana Zia-ar-Rahman (Allah have mercy upon him) narrated the following story concerning events after Mawlana Mahmud Hasan's (Allah have mercy upon him) passing.

Mawlana Mahmud Hasan passed away in the year 1921. His body was lifted from the residence of Hakeem Ajmal Khan who was a well-known Hakeem and a disciple of Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (Allah have mercy upon him). It was brought from Delhi to Deoband and when the cloth was removed from the waist for washing, it appeared that there was neither flesh nor fat on it. Upon seeing this the people began crying. When Mawlana Husain Madni (Allah have mercy upon him), who taught Hadeeth at Darul Uloom Calcutta at the time, came the people related the matter to him. He wept and said, "Shaykh al-Hind had prevented me from revealing this matter. In the jail of Malta, the British used to take my master to a lonely room and apply a red-hot rod to his waist and say, Mahmud al-Hasan! Deliver a fatwa in favour of the British." When he regained his senses he would say, "O British! I am Bilal's heir, my skin may melt away but I shall never deliver a fatwa in favour of the British."

At the time of being exiled in Malta, Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (Allah have mercy upon him) was in his late 60s.

Reference: *Who are the 'Ulama of Deoband?* (English translation of a lecture entitled دیوبند کون اور کیا ہیں؟ Delivered by Mawlana Zia ar-Rahman Farooqi), Page 33.

Timeline of the Prisoners of Malta

- 24 Safar 1335 (circa 20 December 1916): Enter British custody in Jeddah having been arrested by the Sharif in Makkah (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 18 Rabi al-Awwal 1335 (circa 12 January 1917): Leave Jeddah for Suez by ship (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 22 Rabi al-Awwal 1335 (circa 16 January 1917): Arrive in Suez, sent by train to Cairo, imprisoned in Giza jail (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 23 Rabi al-Thani 1335 (15 February 1917): Given passports and ordered to be sent to Malta (Asiran-i-Malta and Safarnama Asir-i-Malta)
- 24 Rabi al-Thani (16 February 1917): Travel to Alexandria from Cairo by train. Ship sails for Malta same day
- 29 Rabi al-Thani 1335 (21 February 1917): Arrive in Malta (Naqsh-i-Hayat and Asiran-i-Malta)
- September or October 1917: Move from Rogate Camp to the Arab Camp (Asiran-i-Malta)
- 2 Jumada al-Thani 1338 (circa 22 February 1920): Leave Malta after approximately 3 years (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 25 Jumada al-Thani 1338 (15 March 1920): Reach Alexandria and kept in prison (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 13 Rajab 1338 (2 April 1920): Sent to Suez and kept in a prison camp (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 5 Ramadan 1338 (23 May 1920): Embark on a steamer for India (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 12 Ramadan 1338 (circa 30 May 1920): Reach Aden (Naqsh-i-Hayat)
- 20 Ramadan 1338 (8 June 1920): Reach Bombay (Naqsh-i-Hayat)

**“Justice and oppression
are two sides of the
same coin.”**

Moazzam Begg - CAGE

Zaynab al-Ghazali

(Allah have mercy upon her)

In a previous chapter you will have read about Nusaybah bint Ka'b (Allah be pleased with her). Lessons from her life were taught to a young Zaynab al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy upon her) by her father. Zaynab was an extraordinary woman who would go on to become a key leader of arguably the biggest Islamic movement in modern history: the Muslim Brotherhood. The only thing that distinguished her from her peers was her gender.

Moazzam Begg (former Guantanamo detainee) writes, 'I had read the book *Return of the Pharaoh*, in which al-Ghazali painfully describes her life, her work, and her imprisonment at the hands of the Egyptian regime under the leadership of Jamal Abdel Nasser. However, it was only after my own experience of imprisonment and torture that I found a new appreciation for this remarkable woman.'

Al-Ghazali's prison memoir is as painful to read as it is inspirational. The original title of her book, *Ayyām min Hayāti* (Days from My Life), belies how she saw her time in prison. Her life was so much more than the six years she spent incarcerated, but it was how she faced those years that resounds through the ages.

Zaynab al-Ghazali al-Jubaili (Allah have mercy upon her) was born on 2nd January 1917 in Al-Daqahliyyah province in northern Egypt. Her father, a merchant and graduate of Al-Azhar University, Cairo, taught Zaynab from a young age about the pivotal role women had played in the birth, defence, preservation, and propagation of Islam.

By the time she reached her teens, Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon her) was committed to advancing the cause of women in Egyptian

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By the time she reached her teens, Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon her) was committed to advancing the cause of women in Egyptian

society. She joined the Egyptian Feminist Union, but this was to be a short sojourn when she quickly resigned after concluding that Islam as a holistic ideology contained all that was needed to promote the cause of women. After all, her great childhood inspiration had been Umm 'Immarah (Nusaybah bint Ka'b, Allah be pleased with her). With renewed vigour, she founded Jama'at Al-Sayyidaat Al-Muslimaat (Muslim Women's Association) in 1936.

Through her hard work and commitment, Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon her) soon came to the attention of the founder and head of the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimeen), Hassan al-Banna (Allah have mercy upon him), who wanted her to lead the women's branch of the organisation, the Muslim Sisterhood (Al-Akhawaat Al-Muslimaat).

Hassan al-Banna had formed the Brotherhood in 1928, four years after the Ottoman Caliphate was abolished. The purpose of the organisation was to challenge the multitude of ideologies that had spread into the psyche of Muslims and to instil in them a vision and a method for the reestablishment of Islam and the caliphate. This mammoth task required Muslims to return to their faith through education and action, and it required everyone who believed in its aims to take part.

At first, Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon her) refused to join the Brotherhood but soon became convinced of its aims and merged her own organisation with it. By the time it was dissolved by the Egyptian government in 1964, Al-Akhawaat Al-Musliaat had three million followers.

She had not intended to get married whilst pursuing her passions, but she eventually did. However, what stands out is that even in marriage, her single-minded devotion to the cause of Islam superseded everything. In her prenuptial agreement, she stated:

If that day comes [when] a clash is apparent between your personal interests and economic activities on the one hand, and my Islamic work on the other, and that I find my married life is standing in the way of da'wah and the establishment of an Islamic state, then each of us should go our own way. I cannot ask you today to share with me this struggle, but it is my right on you not to stop me from Jihad in the way of Allah. Moreover, you should not ask me about my activities with other mujahideen, and let trust be full between us – a full trust between a man and a woman; a woman who, at the age of 18, gave her full life to Allah and da'wah. In the event of any clash between the interests of the marriage contract and that of da'wah, our marriage will end, but da'wah will always remain rooted in me."

She did not demand a dowry – which was her right – but she would not allow her marriage to impede her work, which she regarded as Jihad. She was committed, and anyone close to her knew it. Her enemies would come to know it too.

In an all-male world, it is reasonable to say that Zaynab al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy upon her) was an anomaly. Yet this was not the case throughout the rise of Islam.

Zaynab al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy upon her) had thousands of students, both male and female. She would teach them from books such as Tafseer Ibn Katheer, Zad Al-Ma'ad, Al-Targheeb wa Al-Tarheeb, Ma'alim fi Al-Tariq and many more. Her lectures in the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo were attended by up to 5,000 students. Amongst other things, she was a writer and editor for the Al-Da'wah magazine, ran an orphanage, and regularly had students attend her house.

She writes about how her husband dealt with the late-night intrusions:

"My righteous husband would hear the knock on the door in the middle of the night and would get up to answer it. He would let whoever was our visitor into our study room, then he would wake me up with extreme care and say, 'Some of your children are in the study room and they must be tired from travelling. Before going back to sleep, please wake me up in case you pray in congregation if that is alright with you.' And indeed, I would wake him up."

We would be hard pressed to find any husband so understanding and accepting today – and any woman so committed. But Zaynab al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy upon her) was being prepared by her Creator for a test that most men would fail.

Believing Jamal Abdel Nasser to support the cause of Islam, the Brotherhood had initially supported his military coup against King Farouk. However, after taking power, Nasser increasingly saw the Brotherhood as an existential threat. He accused them of attempting to assassinate him and had two of their leaders executed. These leaders were replaced by Abdul Fattah Ismail, Sayyid Qutb, and Zaynab al-Ghazali. Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon them) would be the only one of the three to survive Nasser's coming purge.

At first, the military regime arrested rank-and-file Brotherhood members, then they went for the leadership. Zaynab was mentally prepared for what was coming, but it was a shock nonetheless. In 1965, they finally came for her.

What happened over the next few days forms the most heart-wrenching part of Zaynab al-Ghazali's (Allah have mercy upon her) ordeal. She was brutally tortured and humiliated in ways difficult to read or relate. Dogs were unleashed on her and ripped out bits of her flesh. She was whipped, beaten, denied food and sanitation, made to sleep on a concrete floor, dressed in ripped and bloodied clothes, and threatened with rape and execution.

Her interrogators tried to force her to give up the names of her students and other members of the Brotherhood. She refused. They brought her students in front of her and lashed them in order to get them to denounce her. They refused. One of them was Mohammed Badie, a young man at the time, now imprisoned by the Egyptian government and facing a death sentence as the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood. I met him during the Arab Spring in 2012 [2]. Young students like Badie received hundreds of lashes while tied to a crucifix-like structure.

On another occasion during her interrogation, Zaynab al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy upon her) was placed in a cell that was slowly filled with water, in an attempt to terrorise her with the prospect of drowning.

Despite all of this, she held on to her cause and her faith. She had no water to make wudhu (ritual purification), but she did not let that or the pain from the torture prevent her from praying. She made tayammum (dry ablution) and bore the pain by mentioning all the names of Allah, as well as reciting prayers and verses from the Qur'an.

Her torturers, who she named, mocked her faith and tested her resolve. They had forgotten they too were Muslims, but she had not.

"His whips found every part of my body, the cruellest thing that jahiliyyah [ignorance] had known both in terms of cruelty and bestiality. As the torture and pain intensified, I could not suppress my screams any longer. I raised my voice to Allah. I repeated His great Name, 'O Allah! O Allah!' Whilst the whips tore into my body, my heart found contentment and affinity with Allah. I lost consciousness, but they tried to awaken me to take more punishment. Blood poured from my feet, and unable to pull myself up, I tried to lean on the wall. Safwat persisted with his whip. I begged to be allowed to sit on the floor, but Shams Badran shouted, 'No! No! Where is your God now?'

Call Him to save you from my hands! Yet call [Jamal Abdel] Nasser and you will see what will happen! Answer me, where is your God?"

They asked her to write down the names of 'everyone' she knew in the Brotherhood. She took the pen and paper and, in another act of defiance, wrote:

"I have many friends, in many countries, who have known me through Islamic da'wah. Our movements on this Earth are for Allah, and He leads those who choose His path. This path is the same as that which the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions (Allah be pleased with them) followed before us. Our aim is to spread Allah's message and to call for the implementation of His rule. I call you, in the Name of Allah, to leave your jahiliyyah, renew your Islam, pronounce the shahadah, and submit and repent to Allah from this darkness that has swathed your hearts and which prevents you from doing any good deed. If you do so, perhaps Allah will take you out of this abyss of jahiliyyah and bring you to the light of Islam."

When the torture failed, they attempted to entice her with offers of money, position, and power. They claimed others had accepted, but knowing this only hardened her resolve.

Her ordeal did not end there. Unbeknownst to her, Zaynab's (Allah have mercy upon her) husband had been arrested for refusing attempts by the authorities to get him to divorce his wife. Not long after, she heard that he had died in prison.

In prison, she also received tragic news of the execution of her colleagues, Abdul Fattah Ismail and Sayyid Qutb (Allah have mercy upon them). Shortly after this, she was taken to court and handed a 25-year sentence. This would have broken most people, but Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon her) had trust in the promise of Allah – success in this life, or the next.

On 5th June 1967, Jamal Abdel Nasser died, only the torment for him would be far worse and much longer. Four years later, Zaynab al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy upon her) was freed under an amnesty by President Anwar Sadat. Before her release, she was asked to sign an agreement to desist with her da'wah activities. She refused.

After her release, she continued on her path of teaching and inspired generations around the world, until her death in 2005 at the age of 88.

The fortunes of the Muslim Brotherhood have gone from leading Egypt to mass imprisonment and killings in the space of a few years. Prison seems synonymous with their experiences, even as the last of Zaynab al-Ghazali's (Allah have mercy upon her) students languish once again in Egyptian dungeons.

There is, however, a question that the legacy of Zaynab (Allah have mercy upon her) imposes on us. In our homes, communities, and countries, have we nurtured societies and environments that could ever produce the likes of Zaynab al-Ghazali, or have we surrendered?

Source: www.islam21c.com

[1] Al-Qur'an 33:35

[2] <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/when-i-met-muslim-brotherhoods-supreme-guide>

يَذْهَبُ الصَّالِحُونَ الْأَوَّلُ فَالْأَوَّلُ وَتَبْقَى مُحَفَالَةُ كَحَفَالَةِ الشَّعِيرِ
وَالْتَّمَرِ لَا يُبَالِيهِمُ اللَّهُ بِأَلَهُ

“The pious men will depart one after another, the remains of people, like the residue of barley and dates will be left; Allah will not care for them (not raise them in value and esteem).”

(Bukhari)

Epilogue

Think of the story of Prophet Moosa (peace be upon him) – born during an oppressive regime where baby boys were put to death.

Baby Moosa had to be hidden and later discarded in a basket down a running stream.

Recall the story of Prophet Nooh (peace be upon him) – how he fled his corrupted village by the will of Allah. Remember how his followers on his Ark were amongst those who were poor and oppressed.

Remember the story of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him). His brothers were overcome with hatred and jealousy of him that instead of discussing this with their father, they threw him into a well.

What about the story of Prophet Shuayb (peace be upon him)? An old and blind man, who was able to “see” the oppression in the town of Madyan, through corruptive business practices of his fellow merchants. He warned them well of their fraud – that it was hurting those who were oppressed.

Think of the story of Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) – who was beaten down terribly by a challenge from Allah – that he was deserted by the people who were the closest to him, who should have been supportive of his plight.

And of course, one of the strongest Prophets, Dawud (peace be upon him) – the Prophet who allowed his faith to grow bigger than his fears to defeat Jalut (Goliath) – even with all his strength, he feared Allah the most and was constantly reminded about oppression. In a sacred hadith, he said,

“O Allah, You know that I love You and I love all those who love You, but how may I endear You to Your servants? Allah said: Remind them

of My favours, My trials and My anger. O Dawud, any of My servants who helped an oppressed person and stood by him in his oppressed state, I'll keep his feet firm on the Day when all feet will be shaken"
(Al-Bayhaqi).

There will come a time when one feels oppressed and contrary to popular belief, Islam is not the cause of oppression, rather the expectations of societal norms that curb one's ability to practise Islam correctly is what is truly oppressive. The Muslim world talks about oppression all the time.

Muslims in Muslim-minority countries often feel oppressed when having to deal with discriminatory practices. Muslims in Muslim-majority countries face oppression in other forms – through challenging governmental policies or occupation by other nationals – whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

On a smaller scale too, there are instances where you can feel stifled or have your freedom impeded and even to a certain extent, you may feel forced to compromise your beliefs or principles. This is where it gets tricky, while there should not be a compromise of faith, how does one prevent him or herself from falling into doubt.

Amongst those who experienced the worse types of oppression were the Prophets of Allah (peace be upon them). Very few of them were born into rich families for a start, and even if they were given power and position thereafter, they were asked to renounce their worldly gains to spread Islam, so none of them were able to use "riches" to influence others. In this materialistic world, this only meant for them to be shunned from society.

Besides the stories of the Prophets above, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was forced to live a very fragile life as the Apostle of Allah, before being able to venture out of Makkah to Madinah. The pagan Arabs

tortured him to the core, mentally and physically. He and his followers were boycotted in a three-year ban that caused most of them the worse hardship of the time.

Even when they survived the ban and the embargo was lifted, the Quraysh plotted to kill Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. During his stay in Makkah, Allah commanded him to spread the message over and beyond the boundaries of Makkah. In his plight, he was often humiliated and taunted, rejected from the norms of society.

But whenever he was in doubt, whenever he was in fear, he stood by Allah's commands in patience, and sometimes in silence, and his unwavering faith in Allah kept him on the right path, followed by the first handful of Muslims, who were amongst the poor and those who had been continuously oppressed by the Quraysh.

So in today's world, whenever the feeling of grave oppression arises, remember the journey of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to where and how he had spread Islam today. Remember the journeys of all the Prophets (peace be upon them) before him, how some of them nearly died. Remember that some of them never had followers.

Remember that many of them were not able to convey the correct message, and the faith they brought were grossly distorted by those who were around during their time and after. Remember that many Prophets (peace be upon them) did not even have a fraction of the comfort that we have today.

Other Practical Tips

No matter how difficult things become, remember the importance of your relationship with Allah. Only Allah can truly alleviate all forms of hardship from the world. Only Allah can grant double ease for each hardship. And only Allah can be the Perfect Judge over the oppression

one is facing, and only Allah can reward a person who undergoes hardship with the permanent resting abode, Paradise.

Speak to Allah all the time. Allah has given us our daily prayers to spill our hearts to Him. He listens 24 hours a day – so invoke Him for His help and blessings. Allah provides Mondays and Thursdays to observe the Sunnah fast because our records are brought up to the Heavens on those days.

The silver lining of any form of oppression is that Allah is always on the victim's side, as long as he or she can bear the burden with dignity, without compromising his or her loyalty towards Allah. Allah reminds everyone about the dangers of oppressing another person.

In a sacred hadith, Allah Almighty says:

"I shall take revenge on the oppressor in this life and the next. I shall take revenge on someone who saw a person being oppressed and was able to help him but did not help him." (Tabarani)

Also, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"Whoever has oppressed another person concerning his reputation or anything else, he should beg him to forgive him before the Day of Resurrection when there will be no money (to compensate for wrong deeds), but if he has good deeds, those good deeds will be taken from him according to his oppression which he has done, and if he has no good deeds, the sins of the oppressed person will be loaded on him." (Bukhari)

With Allah standing by victims of oppression, true believers no longer need to fear what is overwhelming them, but to ride it out with faith and comfort, that Allah is the only Judge that they need to fear, and the only Judge who can compensate in the Hereafter.

أَعْمَالُكُمْ عُمَالُكُمْ، وَكَمَا تَكُونُوا يَكُونُ عَلَيْكُمْ

**“Your leaders are your deeds.
As you are, so shall your leaders be.”**

Cited by al-Hasan al-Basri RH

Since there is no book except the Book of Allah that is free from deficiencies or errors, we always welcome and encourage any advice, comments, criticism and corrections so long as they are scholastic and evidence-based. Every effort has been made to ensure that the book is free from errors, we are only human and prone to err.

Allah grant this book His approval, through His mercy and generosity.

Du'as for Courage and Confidence

يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ أَسْتَغِيْثُ

"O Living, O Sustainer, in your mercy I seek help."

Recite when one is in fear of something, or in doubt or not confident.

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَبَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

"My Lord, expand for me my breast. And ease for me my task. And untie the knot from my tongue. That they may understand my speech."

(16: 25-28)

Baraa' (Allah be pleased with him) reported a man complained to the Prophet ﷺ about anxiety. The Prophet ﷺ replied, Recite abundantly

مُبْحَانَ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ، رَبِّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ، بِالْعَزَّةِ جَلَّتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ

The man said, "Allah took away my anxiety." (الدعوات الكبير للبيهقي)

In Musnad Ahmad - Khalid Ibn Waleed (Allah be pleased with him) narrated, I used to feel uneasy at night. So I came to the Prophet ﷺ and I said, "I feel disturbed at night and I end up striking my sword on anything I see."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Shall I not teach you the phrases taught to me by Ruhul-Ameen (Jibreel)?" I said, "Of course!" He ﷺ said: Say,

أَعُوْذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللّٰهِ التَّامَّاتِ الَّتِي لَا يَجَاوِزُهَا بَرٌّ وَلَا فَاجِرٌ، مِنْ شَرِّ مَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ

فِيهَا، وَمِنْ شَرِّ فِتَنِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ، وَمِنْ كُلِّ طَارِقٍ، إِلَّا طَارِقَ يَطْرُقُ بِخَيْرٍ، يَا رَحْمٰن

TWO SWORDS: OF FLESH AND OF STEEL

In the name of Allah, the Just

The truth is the truth; right is right,
To me it is clear – black and white.

At times you feel odd and at times you feel alone,
Tired, troubled and sometimes torn.

You may not seem intelligent or even very bright,
But speaking the truth will raise you in Allah's sight.
It may cause a dispute; it may end up in a fight,
As the truth is bitter and certainly not welcomed with delight.

Sometimes you feel scared and just want to run,
But remember – that's the cowards way, son.

You'd rather speak with courage and great might,
Go on, give them a fright! They might understand, this matter isn't
light.

We must use our intellect and insight,
To stick up for the truth and keep our left shoulder light.
As the dazzling day ends followed along by the dark night,
Similarly, it is clear what is wrong and what is right.

So dear friend, as I now end,

I hope my words didn't bite, this is my last and final plight....

Please, stand firmly for truth and for justice and for what is right.

*Written in memory of my late father, NazirAhmed Daud Satia (Allah have
mercy upon him) one year after his demise. I believe he taught me courage,
justice, morals, values and principles – Alhumdu Lillah.*

*Out of sight, but not out of mind, Abba. Your voice has left us, but your legacy
of justice remains In Sha Allah.*

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"Mufti Ismail Satia has put together a combination of anecdotes and stories which are appealing to all segments of society, be it the academic minded, the average individual, the child or the adolescent, to provide that spiritual nourishment and motivation."

- **Shaykh Sulaiman Moola, South Africa**

Inspired by the famous quote of **Naima B Roberts**, "Write the stories you needed to read as a child."

"Men are becoming an endangered species, replaced by a generation of lost boys." **Boonaa Mohammed**, Canada

Mufti Ismail Satia completed his memorisation of the Holy Qur'an at the age of 13 in a local masjid, Masjid Sajedeen. He later went on to complete Alimiyyah studies at Jamiatul Ilm Walhuda, Blackburn. Further, he studied Ifta at Mazahirul Uloom, Saharanpur, India. Mufti saheb also spent time serving the great Muhaddith Shaykh Muhammad Yunus Jaunpuri (Allah have mercy upon him). Currently, Mufti Saheb teaches teenage boys in Madrasah and also blogs regularly:

www.mylittlebreathingspace.com

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